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Adobe Creative Cloud for teams

The essential mobile UI toolkit.

How to boost creativity, productivity,
and business impact.

If you lead a creative team, you've noticed a change in the past couple of years. Worldwide, immersion in the digital world and reliance on mobile devices have accelerated already high demands for design that is engaging and adaptable. Almost 93% of internet users worldwide are now accessing content from their phones—an increase of close to 570 million people since the end of 2019, according to Global System for Mobile Communication's 2021 mobile connectivity report.

"The mentality around mobile design and responsive design is evolving," says Mickael Denie, mobile user experience designer at Adobe. "Most users are going to be on mobile almost for everything—even the things that you think they won't."

A customer-first design strategy is now a mobile-first strategy, and smaller teams with limited resources can struggle to hit these targets well. If you're experiencing these growing pains, you're not alone. Happily, with a clear mobile-first strategy and some actionable guidelines, great mobile-first design is well within reach.

Use this step-by-step guide with your creative team to pivot your strategies and workflows toward mobile-first design. The frameworks and checklists in this guide will help you create seamless mobile experiences for your clients and end users, generate new streams of revenue, and reach more customers.

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Design with the end in mind— a customer-first design framework.

To put your mobile-first strategy learnings in the context of real life, choose a mobile-first design project that's current or upcoming. Use this guide to workshop your project through each stage of design transformation.

Good design is well-informed and empathetic—tailored as closely as possible to the needs of your real customers. It first sees clearly what the customer and their journey look like, including their contexts, desires, pain points, and rewards. The more clearly your team can see the customers and their intended behavior, mapped along mobile touchpoints, the more effective your designs will be.

Step 1: Identify your project.

Answer the questions below as well as you can. Use this process again to refine your future mobile-first design workflows.

What is your project?

Who is the target audience?

What does success look like generally for this project?

Understand your customers.

A well-built customer profile—one that clearly describes the common attributes, needs, and motivations of a group of customers—can reduce customer churn and acquisition costs and lay a solid foundation for user-focused design.

"Instead of thinking about how your business is going to accomplish something, do more thinking about what your customers actually want. What would be the ideal experience for them? How can you create that?'" says Matt Beynon, director of experience at Tech9. "Readjust your focus to your customers based on what they want—not based on what you want."

Your marketing team has probably created customer profiles—ask them to provide the right ones to your team for project kickoff.

When designing for customer needs, "Where do you really start?" says Mark Ramel, creative director at FiveStone. "From a marketing perspective, it's obviously data, customer records."

Step 2: Create a persona profile.

Who will the end user be for the project you identified in step 1? Will more than one persona profile be guiding your design? Use the checklist below to create a persona profile for your project. Repeat this process for each profile you need.

Demographic information			
Age		Job title	
Sex		Education level	
Income level		Other	
Psychographic information			
Lifestyle		Goals or aims	
Pain points		Values	
Interests		Other	
Behavioral information			
Purchase habits		Level of engagement	
Common objections		Mobile use	
Purchase readiness		Product use	
Key messages		Other	
Geographic information			
City		Country	
Area or region		Other	
Other			
Any other helpful metrics your company tracks?		What do you want this group of people to think or do?	

Once you're clear about the customer you're designing for, it's vital to understand what you're designing toward.

"Start with the way the user is interacting with your content," Beynon says of customer journeys. "And then you're being intentional about what content you put there."

Complete the table below to help you visualize more clearly how your designs meet specific users' needs.

Step 3: Connect the dots.

Note one or more persona profiles you've created in the left column and then— using your project from step 1—think about how this information can guide the solutions you're designing for these customers.

	The needs, requirements, and problems of this customer profile	How will your project address these specific needs?
Persona profile 1		
Persona profile 2		

Map the journey.

A mobile-first customer journey map shows you and your design team the path your customers make through your content, experiences, and touchpoints on their way to making a purchase. A useful map is informed by data-rich customer profiles, anticipates likely interruptions and changes, and is fine-tuned by testing.

Your marketing team may already have mobile customer journeys mapped by persona profile. If not, put together a simple journey map for each persona. This map will help you understand how these customers interact with and feel about your brand and how your design elements may be helping them or hindering their journey.

Start with a better understanding of your customer touchpoints—the moments when your customer comes into contact with your brand directly or indirectly.

Step 4: Identify touchpoints.

Using your customer profiles (step 2) that you've linked with your project (step 3), write down your customers' goals, touchpoints, and emotional experiences (both pain points and excitement or delight).

Persona profiles	Persona profile 1	Persona profile 2
Goals What are your customers' goals? What are they trying to get or do? Focus here on their aims, not your business goals.		
Touchpoints What modes of communication does your company use? When customers are trying to get their needs met, where do they connect with your brand?		
Emotions What do your customers feel at this touchpoint? What spells the difference between pain or delight at this point?		

To help your team really see the customer journey, create a simple visual map of these communication touchpoints.

Step 5: Make a simple customer journey map.

Use a whiteboard or sticky notes to map out your touchpoints visually from step 4. Include the physical contexts and times your customers will be accessing these touchpoints on their mobile devices. Let your design team see the wide-angle view of your customers' journey.

Use your journey map to see clearly where things are working and which communication touchpoints can be added or improved.

Share customer profiles and their journey maps with your design team regularly. Find ways to keep the end user front and center at the beginning (to shape design requirements), middle (to ensure alignment), and end (to confirm true fit) of the design process.

Design for smooth, seamless mobile-first flow.

You've approached the mobile-first design process with a clear picture of the end user and their physical context. Now, turn your attention to their experience of seeing, touching, and navigating through content on a handheld device. The integrated creative apps and UI kits in [Adobe Creative Cloud for teams](#) can help you pull these perspectives together seamlessly for a smooth, engaging user experience.

Take stock of your content.

First, put your website content into a simple outline format. This will let you sift through, sort, and rearrange your content before conceptualizing it in layout form.

Step 6: Prioritize your mobile content.

Create a mobile-first content flow. What elements should appear first? Which can be second-tier in a hamburger menu? Use your outline to prioritize and simplify your content for smaller screens. Focus on logically organized essentials. Make lower priority nested content easy to find.

What are your highest priority topics, and where will they appear (on landing pages, in a hamburger menu on the home page, and so on)?

Which topics should appear in second-tier menus, and how will they be displayed?

What does success look like generally for this project?

You've prioritized the flow for smartphones above. Now, rearrange content for midsize (tablet and small laptop) and larger (laptop and desktop) displays.

Bring eyes, hands, and devices together.

Construct a mobile visual layout that supports a smooth, intuitive partnership between hands and devices. Use your outline from step 6 and the following checklists to shape and check your work.

Visually organize.

Mobile content should be compact and concise. Because real estate is limited, the most important content should be in an obvious place for your eyes to rest first. Consolidate common topics on menus and organize them in the simplest possible A to B path so that people can find information quickly and intuitively.

☐ Ensure there's a visual hierarchy to match the topical prioritization of your content. This means clear, bold, uncluttered titles and headlines on landing pages.

☐ Stick with consistent, familiar navigation.

☐ Use Component States in Adobe XD to intuitively create collapsible menus and widgets.

☐ Place access to higher traffic landing pages on the first visible level of a phone display's collapsible menu.

☐ Use guides, grids, and mockups instead of starting from scratch.

☐ Focus on the navigation bar. Minimize your navigation bar and make it as simple as possible. Put second-tier content headings into a hamburger menu.

☐ Help users get an instant understanding of content and avoid "long scroll" issues by keeping headings and titles above the fold.

☐ Keep copy brief at two-to-three-sentence paragraphs so users can skim at a glance.

☐ Draw from the AI-powered Adobe Fonts library, and use text that's bold, clear, high contrast, and easy to read on small devices.

☐ Use plenty of spacing at borders. Keep layout and lines clean with plenty of white space.

Step 7: Design for shape and space.

Use the checklist above to do a first pass on the mobile site layout for your project. What other moves did you make in the architecture of your site to make the flow clean and natural? Write them below.

Get hands on it.

Think about [how people hold](#) their phones, and in what locations and surroundings. Think about dexterity on the screen—which fingers and motions make navigation most intuitive.

☐ Let the [Content-Aware Layout](#) in XD suggest buttons large enough and with enough spacing so that users don't need to zoom in or manually resize content to read or click links.

☐ Place navigation links on the screen in positions that make both organizational and touch-access sense.

☐ Place touchscreen targets far enough from other content to avoid unintentional navigation.

☐ Think about placement of fingers versus thumbs on the screen and how that affects navigation flow.

Step 8: Design for digits.

Use the checklist above to focus on the way your project design works in your users' hands. Have everyone on your team—and people with hands of all sizes—get into your mobile site and give feedback about button functionality, access, and sensitivity. Write what you learned here.

Draw users in.

Keep users engaged by giving them reasons to explore and interact with your content. Consider these elements to drive traffic and increase user engagement:

☐ Design bold, colorful, eye-catching visuals and prompt interactivity where it makes sense in the flow of content.

☐ Delight users with playful animation and motion graphics using [Auto-Animate](#) in XD.

☐ Keep an eye on loading speed. Use the three-second rule of thumb for a page to load fully— if it takes longer than three seconds to load, delete or reduce page elements.

☐ Enable push notifications and in-app messaging, but make sure pop-ups don't cover any navigation features and can be easily closed.

☐ Keep CTAs bold, simple, and consistent so users can see them easily.

☐ Implement chatbots if they suit your content.

☐ Make asking questions and submitting feedback easy.

Step 9: Design for engagement.

Use the checklist above to see how your design encourages user engagement. Write any notes for improvement below.

Put your friendliest foot forward.

Create a site that's [easy to find](#), one that users want to both explore and return to. Make sure your mobile site is as user-friendly as possible by following these guidelines:

- ☐ See how your site stacks up with Google's [Mobile-Friendly Test](#).

- ☐ Make local searches easy and relevant by using keywords and phrases such as "near me."

- ☐ Consider using a separate mobile URL if the functionality on your mobile site is significantly different from the desktop design.

- ☐ Use high-powered keywords in your title tags.

- ☐ Make meta descriptions thorough but concise.

- ☐ If your brand's mobile site is app-based, make app store optimization [a priority](#). Know which keywords to implement. Use the right name for your app.

- ☐ Use social sign-ups, offer incentives, and provide clear indications of progress to facilitate seamless user app onboarding.

Step 10: Check for user-friendliness.

Use the checklist above to assess how easy to use your design is. Write any notes for improvement below.

Take it for a test-drive.

Denie recommends testing mobile designs in real time. "If you connect your phone or your tablet, you can see what your design looks like in real life. And that is very important when I design."

Everyone on your team should be a mobile-first user and practiced at mobile navigation. Have team members and potential users push the design through every possible path, clicking all pages, buttons, and links. Testers should ask themselves:

☐   Did I run into any speed bumps? If so, what were they?

☐   How quickly do splash screens, pages, and media load?

☐   Is the layout easy to understand and read on a small screen?

☐   Is the layout crowded or busy? What can be rearranged or cut for a cleaner look?

☐   Do the images display correctly, or is there distortion, overlap, or pixelation?

☐   Do I have to do a lot of clicking to get where I'm going? How many steps do I have to take?

☐   What's the longest navigation path, and how can we make it shorter?

☐   Are there too many fields in the forms?

☐   Are there too many steps to subscribe?

Use this checklist as a reference guide to help your team keep these points in mind as they test. If your project requires more in-depth testing, prototype and lab testing can yield more specific, data-driven insights.

Step 11: Test it out.

Use the checklist above to assess again how easy to use your design is. Write notes for improvement below.

Make the leap.

You've now got a clear view of your customers and their mobile journey. And you have a collection of finely tuned best practices to help you dial in informed, precise, mobile-first design for these users.

Use and customize these guidelines as you work through subsequent projects and refine your creative team's mobile-first strategy.

The reward is worth the effort. Your pivot to mobile-first design pays big dividends when your mobile customers—surfing on their phone at a cafe downtown, doing research on a train, or browsing on the sofa after dinner—have their first engaging, memorable experience with your brand.

Adobe can help. *Adobe Creative Cloud for teams gives you the world's best creative apps and services in a single, secure, integrated platform. With 20+ desktop and mobile apps, Creative Cloud Libraries for keeping assets in sync across apps and devices, and 1TB of storage per user, this complete creativity solution is designed to support your business at every stage of growth. Plus, you can count on simplified license management and total control over your software to help your team stay focused on creating great work.*

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