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Real Life Digital
A
White Paper



Everything you need to know about
Responsive Website Design

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What is responsive website design?

Responsive websites allow users to achieve their goal on any device (desktop, laptop, tablet, mobile) without obstruction or annoyance.

The user experience is optimised to suit a range of screen sizes and orientations, ensuring the design and content still works and is usable using a touchscreen device. Content and navigation elements dynamically re-flow and resize to suit the 'viewport' (i.e. device screen size) and in some extreme cases change form, or even disappear altogether.



It's not just a case of 'seeing the same thing but smaller' - at mobile screen sizes your text can become unreadable, images scroll horizontally off the page, you can't easily navigate... your user can end up in 'pinch and zoom' hell.

You have just seconds to get your user's attention - or frustrate them!

Responsive is:

different sets of design rules which are defined by several 'breakpoints' (rather than specific phone or tablet sizes) which allow a site to display in an optimised way for a variety of devices.

Responsive is:

a necessity in a world where more people now consume online content through a mobile than any other device such as desktop machines, laptops and consoles.

Responsive is not:

just a website that 'works on a mobile phone', because all websites technically work on mobiles. But without responsive optimisation your site is likely to be completely unusable!

Responsive is not:

an automated process. Design decisions must be made by a human, not a machine, to ensure a positive user experience and prevent bugs from arising.

Why do I need responsive website design?

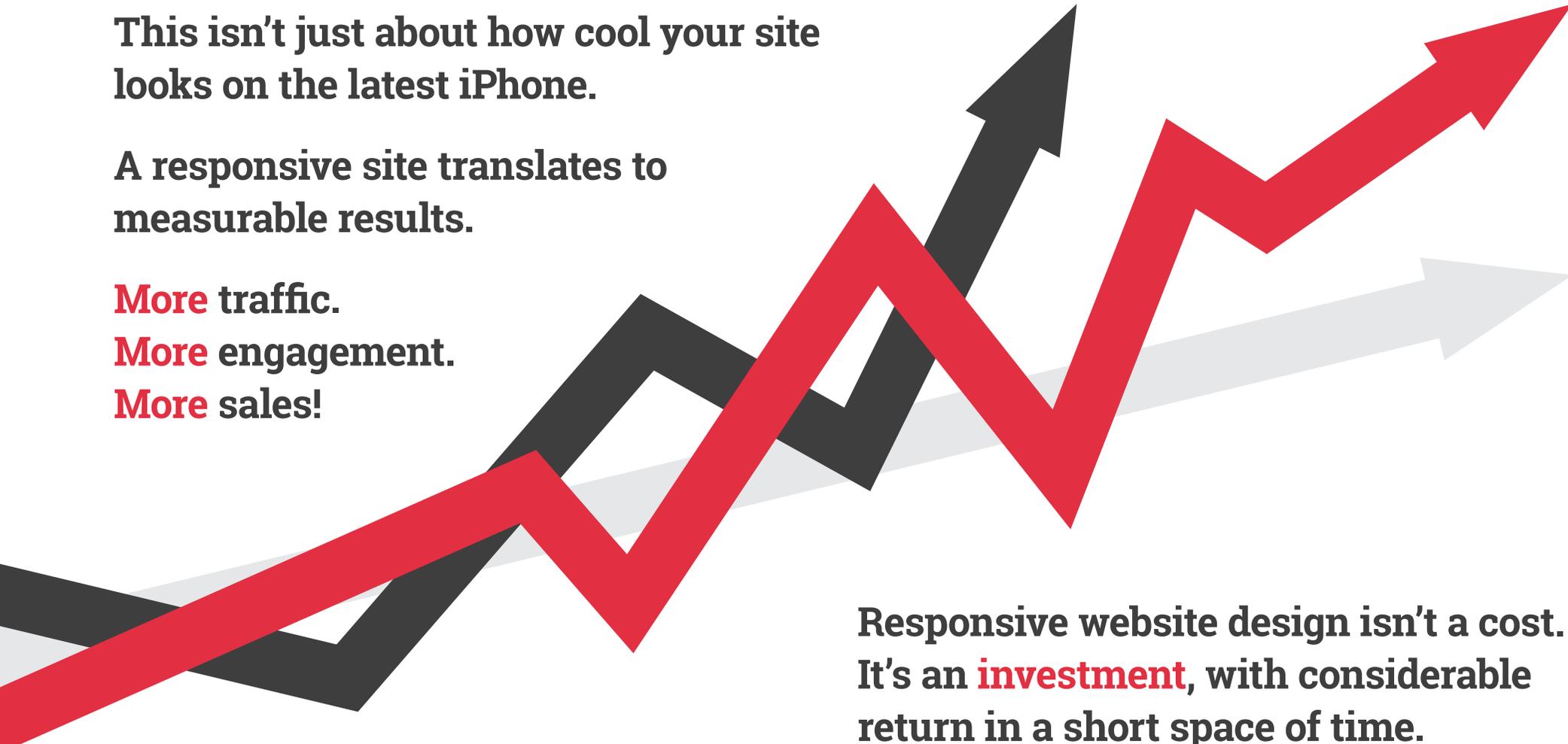
This isn't just about how cool your site looks on the latest iPhone.

A responsive site translates to measurable results.

More traffic.

More engagement.

More sales!



Responsive website design isn't a cost. It's an **investment**, with considerable return in a short space of time.

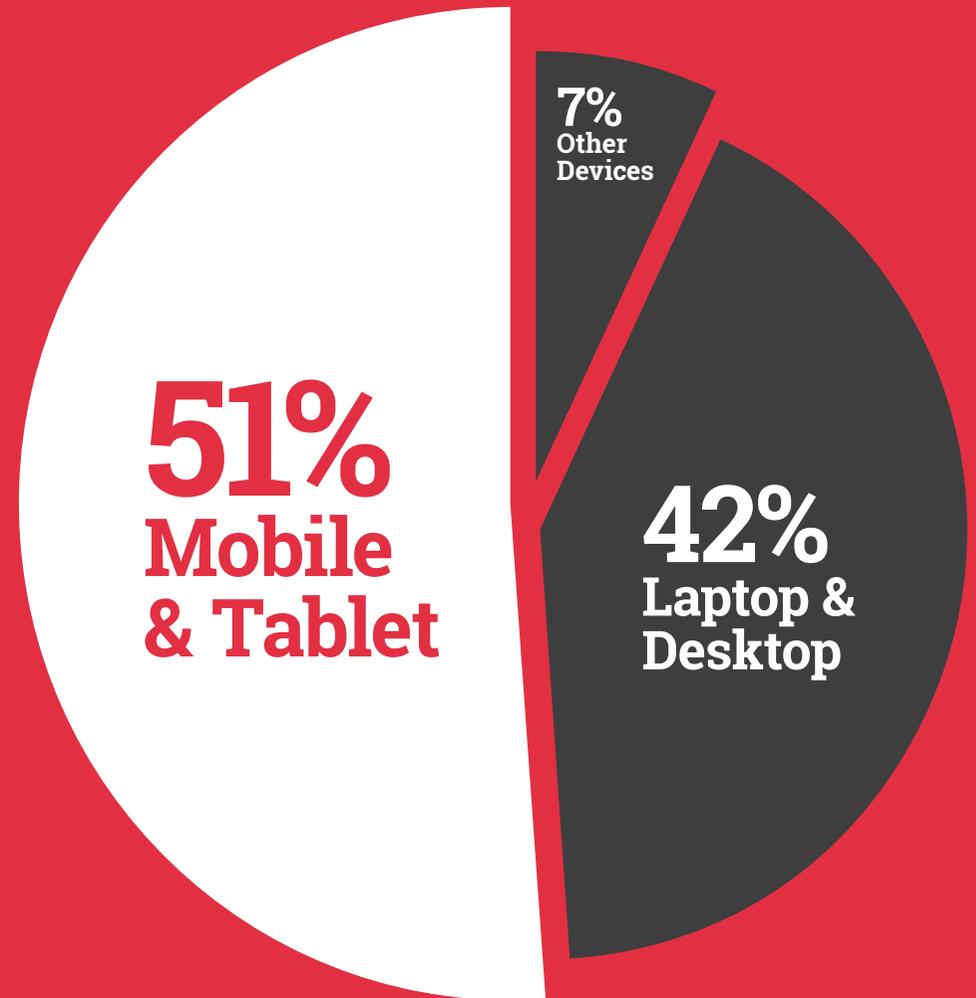
[Read the "Why do I need responsive website design?" blog article now!](#)



The future is now because we've reached the tipping point

In 2015*, adult users spent 51% of their online time using a mobile compared with 42% on a desktop device. The other 7% accounts for other devices.

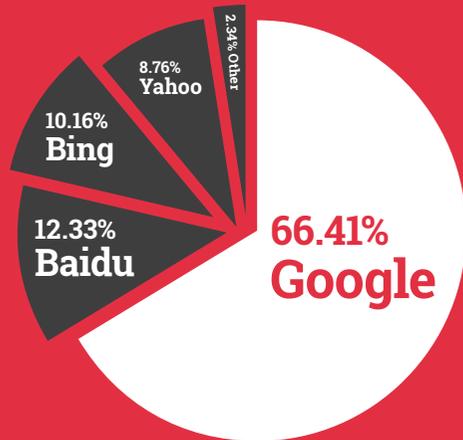
*YTD (July 2015)



Bosomworth, D. (2015). Mobile Marketing Statistics 2015. Retrieved from <http://www.smartinsights.com/mobile-marketing/mobile-marketing-analytics/mobile-marketing-statistics/>

In 2015 Google enjoyed 66.44% (desktop) and 92.34% (mobile) of all search engine enquiries. So your Google ranking matters more than ever.

% market share for desktop search engine queries 2015¹



% market share for mobile search engine queries 2015²

Unknown author/s. (2015). Realtime Web Analytics With no Sampling.

1. Retrieved from <https://www.netmarketshare.com/search-engine-market-share.aspx?qprid=4&qpsp=2015&qnp=1&qptimeframe=Y&qpcustomd=0>
2. Retrieved from <https://www.netmarketshare.com/search-engine-market-share.aspx?qprid=4&qpsp=2015&qnp=1&qptimeframe=Y&qpcustomd=1>



#mobilegeddon

In April 2015 Google unleashed “#mobilegeddon”; a change to their ranking algorithm that checks mobile device usability and punishes non-responsive websites by demoting them. Even if you’re searching on a desktop or laptop.

The 7 deadly sins of responsive

Don't send your users into non-responsive hell! Send them to usability heaven!

There are many who claim to have responsive sites (and claim to build them) but they aren't actually responsive at all.

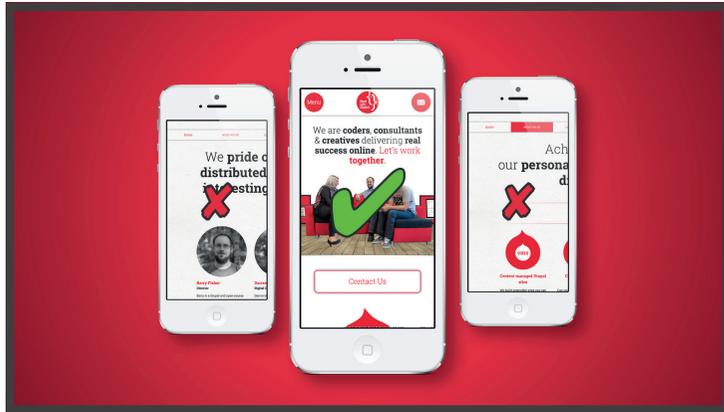
Here is our 'buyer beware' list - if you're someone needing a responsive website, make sure to have a look at your chosen web agency's portfolio to check for these 7 common no-nos, and don't be afraid to ask about them.

If you're a web developer or designer yourself, then here is your checklist. You're welcome!

[Read the "7 deadly sins of responsive" blog article now!](#)

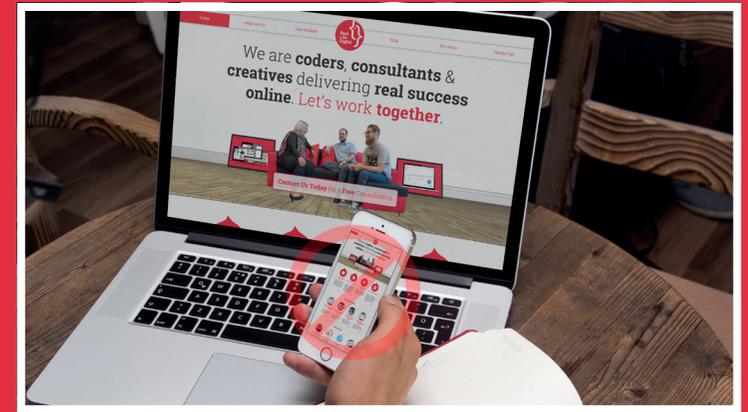


1. Only making some stuff responsive



Just because your homepage passes Google's responsive test doesn't mean the whole site will. Any pages that don't come up to scratch will affect the overall search engine ranking and performance of your entire website - not just those pages.

2. Shrinking the site



Placing a "width:100%;" container on your website will make it shrink to fit any device width. This means your entire site - the text, the images and the links are now so small they're completely unusable. It also won't pass Google's responsive tests.

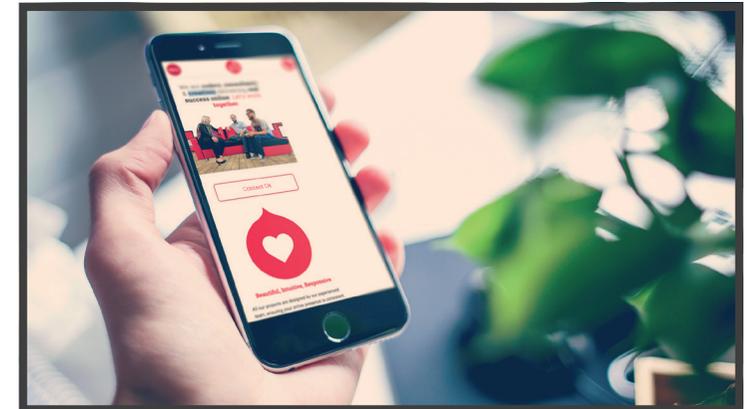


3. Using ancient HTML markup

```
menu.html
1 <table cellpadding="0" cellspacing="0" border="0">
2 <tr>
3 <td colspan="3" height="120px">...</td>
4 </tr>
5 <tr>
6 <td class="menu" valign="top">...</td>
7 <td class="content" valign="top">...</td>
8 <td class="aside" valign="top">...</td>
9 </tr>
10 <tr>
11 <td colspan="3">...</td>
12 </tr>
13 </table>
```

Using the latest coding practises means you can float your components around a fully 'responsive grid' framework. If your developer is using HTML table tags to position your page elements... run!

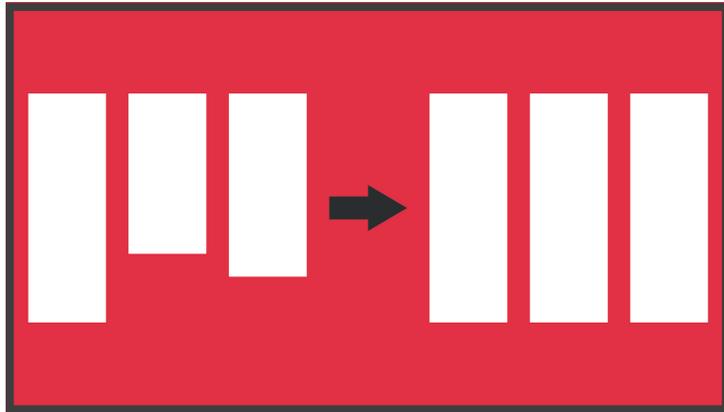
4. Horizontal scrolling



Occasionally a stubborn element will cause horizontal scroll, which in turn affects the usability of the vertical scroll, sending your user into a horizontal white space abyss. Leaving this unfixed is unforgivable but a common mistake.

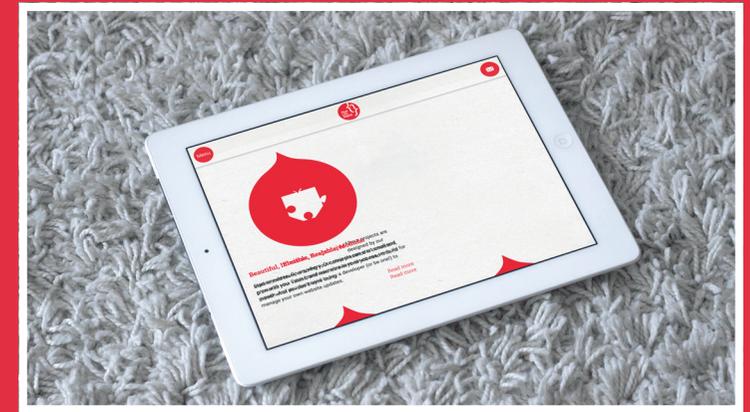


5. Not using equal heights in grids



Responsive designs adhere to a traditional grid but move around it. The number of rows and columns changes between devices, causing a “stepped” effect as the elements in each row are now different heights. To prevent this we can use code calculations to dynamically resize the items in a given row based on the tallest.

6. Not adjusting padding, margins and overlaps



Padding and margins need tweaking for different breakpoints or you can end up with excessive white space inside and between elements. Sometimes when elements flow around a grid they can lose properties and collapse into one another.



7. Deleting useful components



Unless there's a great reason for completely deleting a component for a smaller screen size, then it should be re-formatted, re-worked or re-factored. Disappearing functionality creates inconsistency and could have a detrimental effect on the user's experience.

The 7 deadly sins of responsive



As you can see, there are quite a few pitfalls with implementing a responsive website if you don't know what to look out for. There are many 'DIY' templated website solutions (and also many inexperienced designers and developers!) who will offer a responsive website that really isn't responsive. Don't get caught out.

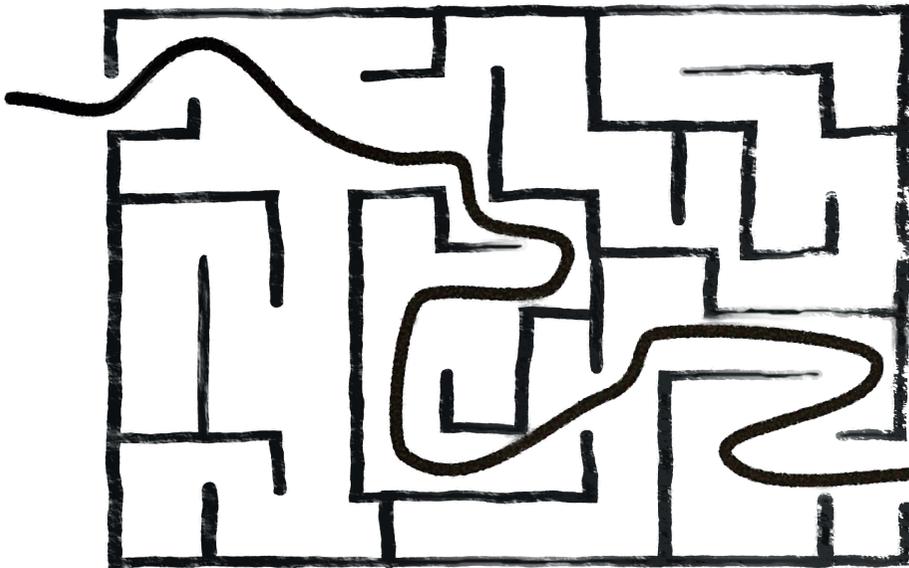


Overcoming the drawbacks of responsive

Even after looking at all the data on why responsive sites are important and worth doing properly, there are still some people out there who are stuck in 1995!

They will try to tell you that responsive isn't all it is cracked up to be and so you might as well not bother.

Here are some phrases you might hear from responsive naysayers... and our explanations as to why they're wrong!





**There is functionality that's
key to my site that won't
work on a smaller screen
so responsive won't
work for me!**

This simply isn't true nor is it a drawback of responsive design. A good designer will be able to re-work any of your functionality for smaller screens. Functionality that goes missing is the result of poor decision making and execution.

PIXEL PERFECT
TEXT
LOCKUPS
ARE NOW
RESPONSIVE

I use pixel perfect text lockups which won't resize dynamically unless I replace them with images, which is bad for my SEO.

Actually, you can recreate text lockups using SVG - an advanced vector graphic format which doesn't degrade in quality with scaling and retains your SEO - as it can contain text. It can also be resized just like an ordinary image!



Maps are horrible on mobile devices. They are too small to interact with at that screen size.

Maps on smaller devices do require careful consideration but providing they are properly planned for there is no reason not to use them. Just take a look at Google Maps, Apple Maps or Waze on your smartphone.



**My images are super wide
which looks great on my
laptop but will look terrible
on a mobile device.**

Super wide images can look poor on smaller portrait devices but using device recognition or CSS breakpoints we can change the aspect ratio and even the sources of the images to be better suited for the 'viewport'.



In Conclusion

A responsive website that works on all devices is no longer a 'nice-to-have' - it's a necessity if you want your site to fulfil it's full potential.

Now you know what responsive design is. You know why you need it. You know what to watch out for and you know how to avoid the pitfalls.

So what are you waiting for?

Remember:

More of your users are now **searching on mobile devices** than any other devices, so that's where they are likely to first experience your site

Having a partially responsive, or badly executed mobile experience is **as bad as not having a responsive website at all** - both for your users, and for your search engine ranking

Even if your type of customer is likely to search for your site on desktops and laptops - Google will still **demote you in their rankings for not being responsive**

Your site's **key functionality can always be re-designed or re-worked for smaller screens** with the proper planning and the right team behind you.

Who are Real Life Digital?

We are coders, consultants & creatives who build websites and online applications with a focus on high quality, timely delivery, and value for money.

We help our clients achieve their online goals with world class product management, consultancy, user experience excellence, technical expertise, hosting and support services.

- Responsive (touch device support) as standard
- Search engine optimised as standard
- Accessible as standard
- Flexible, agile and modular methods of delivery
- We're approachable and value-driven
- We have creative, technical and consultancy talent in-house



For more details, visit our website: www.reallifedigital.com/what-we-do



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