Developing a Progressive Mobile Strategy

dave olsen, wvu university relations - web

@dmolsen

Thanks for the introduction. So today I'll be presenting on developing a progressive mobile strategy for your institution...

West Virginia University.
UNIVERSITY RELATIONS — WEB

3302

DAVE OLSEN

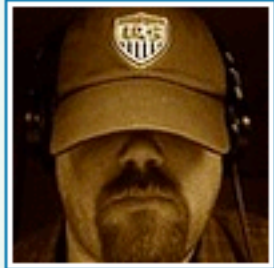programmer

8.5 years at wvu

2 years playing w/ mobile

Monday, September 5, 2011

Again, my name is Dave Olsen and for the last eight and a half years I've worked at West Virginia University as a programmer and sometimes project manager. I work in the web unit of University Relations. So that's a technical unit within our marketing and communications group. I've been working on mobile websites for the last two years and those include not only our main site m.wvu.edu but quite a few marketing focused mobile websites. For scale to compare against your institution WVU is a land grand university with 32,0000 students.

slideshare.net/dmolsenwvu

This presentation is already available on SlideShare at the address shown here. My entire script for the talk is included as notes for each slide. So all the numbers and anything else I mention is on slideshare.

from 30,000 feet and...

I want to be clear, this is a talk about strategy and as such it's coming from a very 30,000 foot level…

...2 years in the making.

Monday, September 5, 2011

…and I'm distilling two years of experience watching mobile grow on our campus. So I won't be diving too much into implementation details but if you have questions feel free to interrupt me.

What I'll Talk About

- Glossary of Terms
- Why Mobile
- A Progressive Strategy
- Tools & Resources
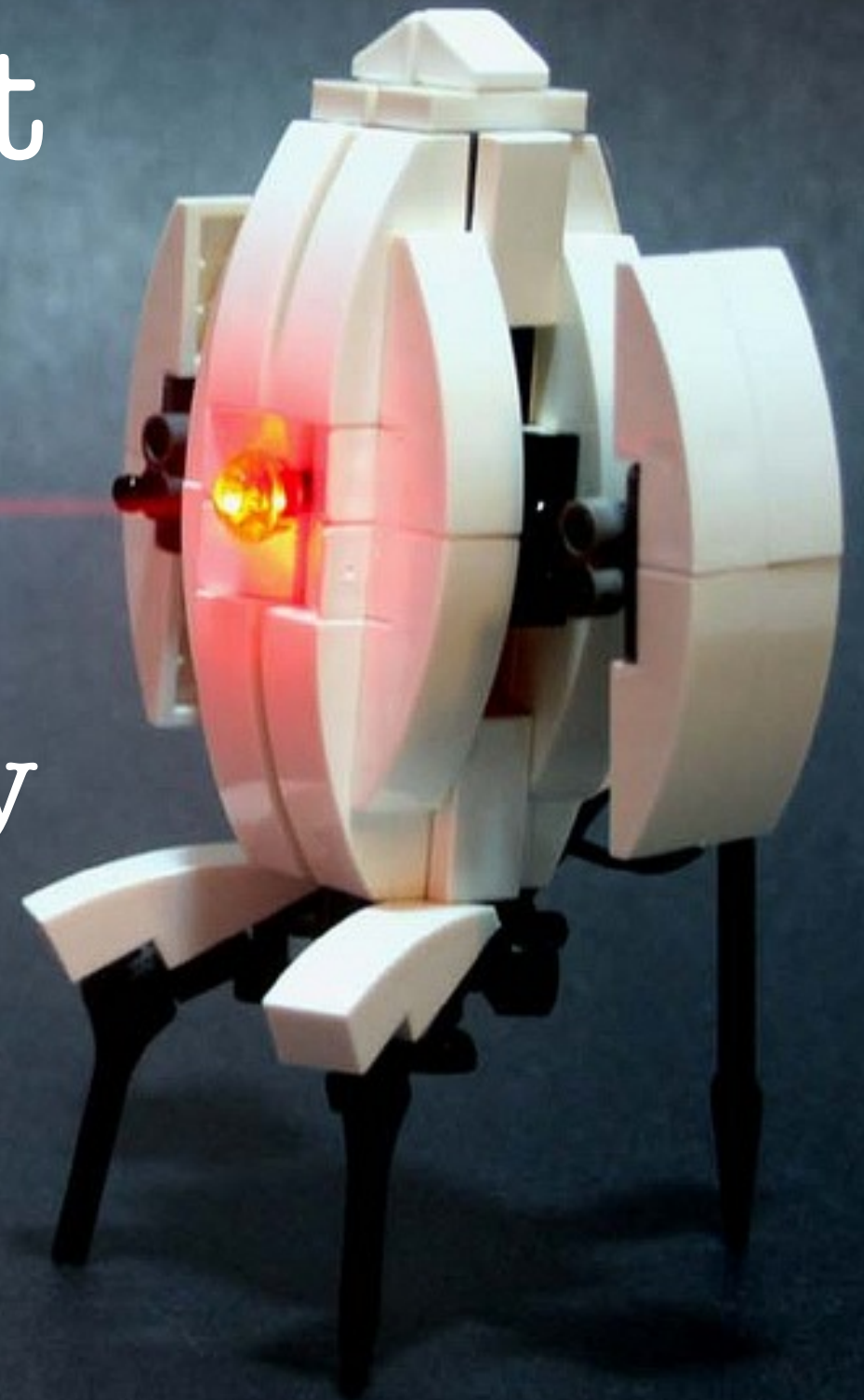
So what will I be talking about today... I'm going to start off by reviewing some terms I use in the presentation that folks might not be familiar with, then some reasons why you would want to think about pursuing a mobile strategy for your institution, followed by the meat of the presentation where we'll discuss how I think you should lay out your strategy, and then, lastly, some tools you can use to pursue that strategy.

Glossary of Terms

So the glossary of terms…

def. **Native Apps**

an application developed to run natively on the targeted device. usually written in a device specific language like Objective-C or Java. delivered through app stores (*for the most part*).

Available on the **App Store**

"Native apps" tends to be the most confusing term that I use with clients. Everyone wants one and they don't necessarily see the difference between an app and a mobile website. A native app is an application developed to run natively on the targeted device. Usually written in a device specific language like Objective-C or Java. The simplest way to think about it is if you can go to the iTunes store or the Android Marketplace and download an application from there it's a native app.

def. **iOS**

the operating system that powers the iPhone, iPod Touch, iPad and Apple TV. Analogous to Android.

iOS is the operating system that powers the iPhone, iPod Touch, iPad and Apple TV. It's analogous to Android as both are operating systems. If I'm going to talk about Android as an operating system with it's myriad of devices then the same courtesy should be extended to Apple. The iPod Touch is a surprisingly popular device on our campus.

def. **Mobile Web & Desktop Web**

mobile web refers to browser-based access to the internet from mobile devices. *desktop web* is just my way of referring to non-mobile access.

Mobile web refers to browser-based access to the internet from mobile devices. It may be more correct to refer to it as the mobile-optimized web. And the desktop web is just my way of referring to non-mobile-friendly sites.

def. **WebKit**

a layout engine that powers a number of popular mobile browsers including Mobile Safari. *not all WebKit-based browsers are equal!*

a layout engine that powers a number of popular mobile browsers including Mobile Safari. In the same way that we have different versions of internet explorer there are different versions of WebKit. They're not all created equal.

def. **Adaptive Web Design**

fluid layouts coupled with CSS3 media queries and JavaScript providing an alternate look & feel for content based on requesting device. synonymous with *responsive web design.*

Adaptive designs are site designs with fluid layouts that are coupled with CSS3 media queries and JavaScript. This provides an alternate look & feel for content based on the requesting device. It's synonymous with *responsive web design*.

So why
mobile

With the definitions out of the way let's look at why you'd want to pursue a mobile strategy for your campus.

65% of 18-29 year olds have accessed the mobile internet

from Pew Internet & American Life Project report, May 2010

According to the Pew Internet and American Life Project, in May 2010, 65% of mobile users in the 18-29 demographic, part of the demographic we target, reported that they had used the mobile internet.

23% of prospects searched
a college site from
a mobile device

Monday, September 5, 2011

According to the E-Expectations report from Noel Levitz that came out in July of last year, 23% of prospects had searched a college site from a mobile device. I'm not positive how much stock I put in that number since I don't know how they were classifying mobile devices but it's still pretty staggering.

Currently, **30%** of US population uses smartphones.

By 2012, **50%** of US population will use smartphones.

from Asymco, December 2010

Monday, September 5, 2011

And, finally, according to Comscore roughly 30% of Americans owned smartphones at the end of October 2010. That's up from 18% the year previous. The kicker, by the start of 2012, 6 short months away, half of the US population is forecasted to be using smartphones.

True
Anytime, Anywhere Access

Monday, September 5, 2011

Obviously, anytime, anywhere access is at the very heart of why you'd want to utilize the mobile internet. Once you provide mobile access to information you've empowered your students, faculty, and staff to make decisions wherever they are. Mobile internet is truly the always on, everywhere 24/7 internet.

Smartphones are **SUPER** phones.

Monday, September 5, 2011

As mobile devices like the iPhone, the latest Android devices and the upcoming releases from Blackberry and Windows Mobile come out the lines between traditional computing and traditional mobile are blurring. As such users are starting to expect access to the resources they would traditionally get on their desktop or laptop but on the go.

So how 'bout some **numbers** from WVU?

To help you learn from our own experience I'm going to give you some numbers from our main mobile website, m.wvu.edu. The site was launched in August 2009 using the original MIT Mobile Framework, the now very out-of-date MIT Mobile Framework, and we launched with a number of, what I term, service-oriented sections like a campus map, directory, calendar and emergency information just to name a few. We did a refresh in April 2010 and that's what you see today. We're currently working on version 3 of this and it should launch in time for the fall semester and, hopefully, it'll show a new way forward for mobile websites in higher ed.

7-day Moving Average of Traffic to m.wvu.edu

8000

6000

4000

2000

0

Aug 28, 2009 Oct 25, 2009 Dec 22, 2009 Feb 18, 2010 Apr 15, 2010 Jun 10, 2010 Aug 7, 2010 Oct 3, 2010 Nov 30, 2010 Jan 27, 2011 Mar 26, 2011 May 22, 2011
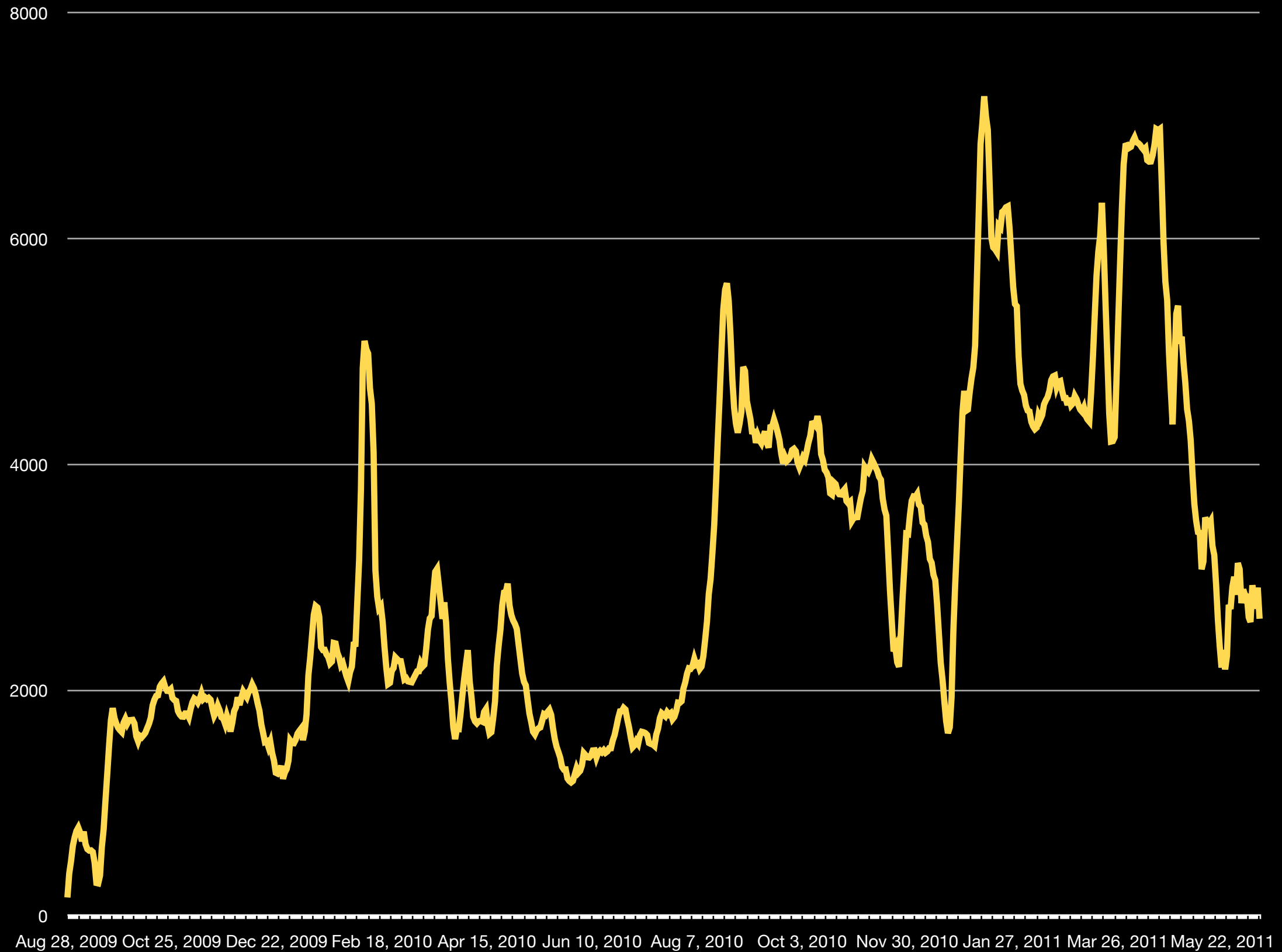
Monday, September 5, 2011

This is a chart showing a 7-day moving average of page views per day for the site. It's pretty obvious that there's a general trend of increased usage with some interesting peaks.

Average Page Views per Day by Semester for m.wvu.edu

300%+ increase in average traffic

6000

4500

3000

1500

0

Fall 2009   Spring 2010   Fall 2010   Spring 2011

Average page views per day
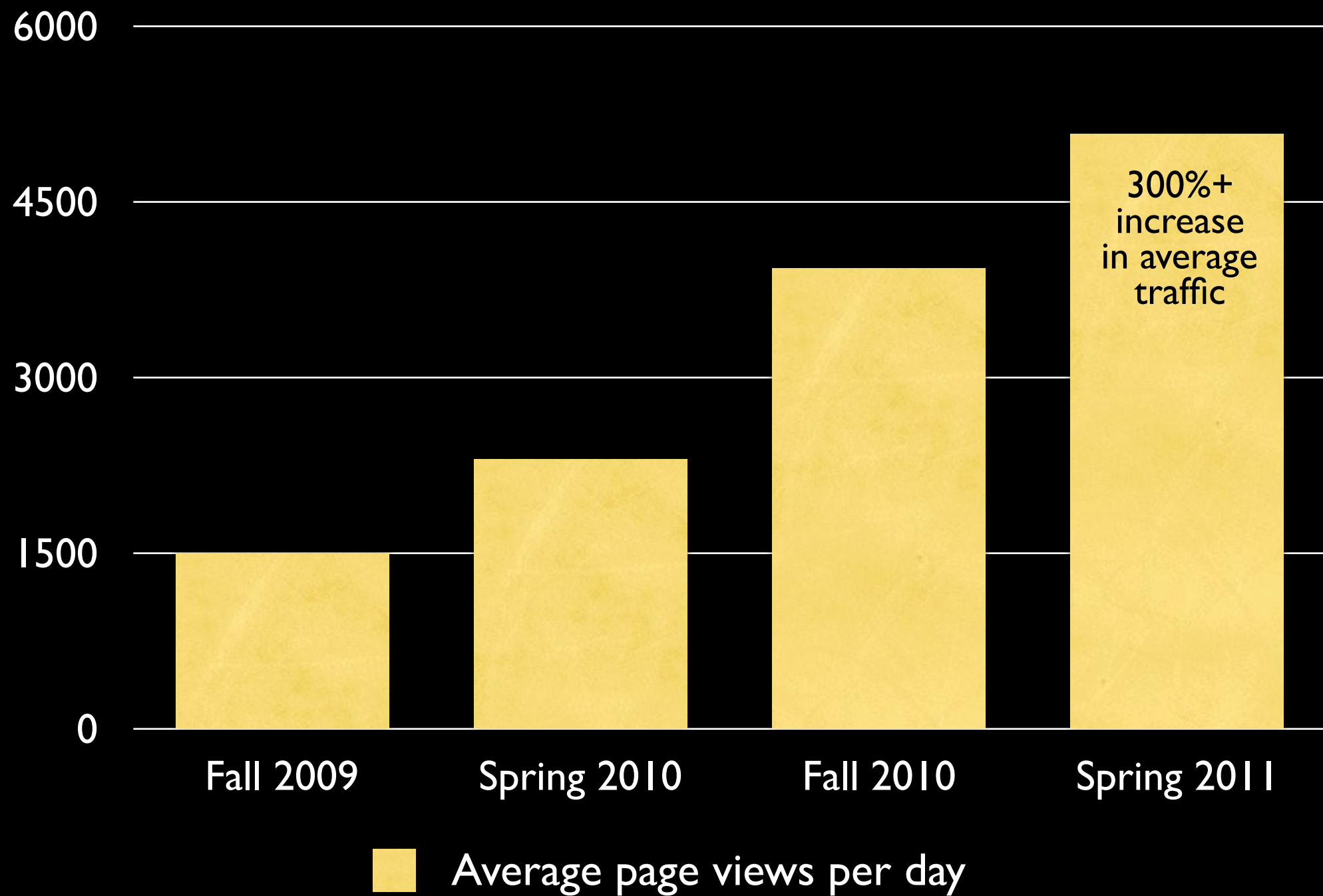
Monday, September 5, 2011

Here is the semester-to-semester growth in traffic. I've left out summer just because it's an obvious lagging metric and I don't have another summer semester to compare against. It's pretty obvious from these numbers that more and more users are accessing our content with mobile devices. To me, more page views equals more devices.

7-day Moving Average of Traffic to m.wvu.edu

Start of Spring '11

Start of Fall '10

Snowstorm

Start of Spring '10

8000

6000

4000

2000

0

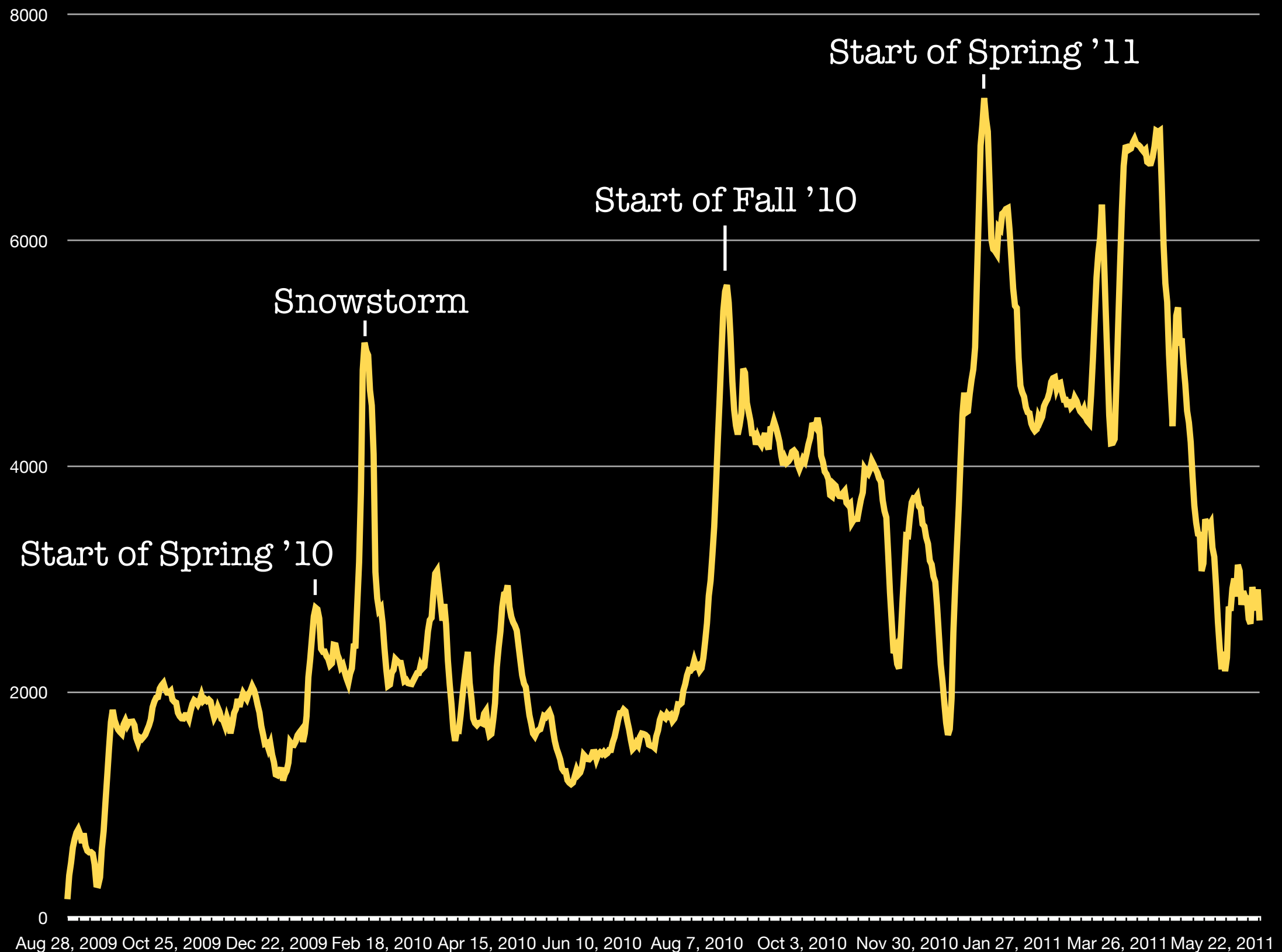Aug 28, 2009 Oct 25, 2009 Dec 22, 2009 Feb 18, 2010 Apr 15, 2010 Jun 10, 2010 Aug 7, 2010 Oct 3, 2010 Nov 30, 2010 Jan 27, 2011 Mar 26, 2011 May 22, 2011

Monday, September 5, 2011

And when you review when the peaks you can see how much of an uptick each new batch of students caused for the mobile site. For the most part universities target the best population for quickly adopting and refreshing new tech like mobile devices. Also, those upticks are almost completely driven by visits to our mobile campus map. It's by far the most popular resource we have.

m.wvu.edu has had **2 million page views**. Or **10%** of the traffic our home page has had over the same time period.

Over the last two years m.wvu.edu has served out over two million page views. 2 million page views of mobile-optimized and mobile-specific content. To put that number into a little bit of perspective, during the same time our home page did a hair over 20 million page views. So our mobile site had 10% of the traffic of our home page.

Android   iOS

35% vs. 32%

iPod Touch alone accounts for 10% of our traffic.

Just as an aside for those who are curious, yes, Android does beat out iOS for usage of our mobile site. These are the numbers for the last semester. And note that the iPod Touch, a non-traditional mobile device simply on WiFi accounts for 10% of the overall site traffic.

and our mobile presence continues to **grow**...

And our mobile presence at WVU is greater than just that one mobile website. We have an iPhone app called iWVU, we've mobile-optimized our news site, done some mobile-optimized marketing pieces with the coolest probably being the recent NCAA tournaments project and, finally, adaptive designs like the one done for our student affairs site are becoming more popular. Oh, and we just added mobile template support to our CMS.

Strategy

So with those reasons, and after seeing some numbers from our work, you're all set to dive into the world of mobile. How do we go about getting a strategy going for one…

an iPhone app...

So invariably a higher-up will say they want this. They'll want an iPhone app. It's the cool thing.

an iPhone app...

Unfortunately for you, an iPhone app is not a mobile strategy. A tactic, yes, just not a strategy.

an iPhone app...   ...a mobile website

+

Ok, so how 'bout we add a mobile website to the mix. We'll have all devices mostly covered with the website and then we have the slick iPhone app for PR purposes and we've made our President happy. So that's a strategy, right?

an iPhone app...   ...a mobile website

Unfortunately, no. You can see that coming, right? You're a smart bunch.

Does your school have **just one website**? Then why only one mobile solution?

Does your school only have one website? Then why would we would think that one mobile solution, even though the last example was two different platforms they're still essentially the same thing which is a central portal to select services, would really work. And, remember, I'm talking from a strategic level here. You may start with them but they're not the end…

these are just the start...

standalone mobile sites

adaptive designs

native apps

mobile templates

APIs

Instead they're the start. This should give you an idea of what an institutions mobile strategy might encompass. Actually, this isn't even the half of it as it's focused strictly on traditional information outlets and not the new ways we can use mobile devices like NFC or even old ways like SMS.

We have, on the left, native apps. So they'll either be central services native apps like iWVU or maybe LMS native apps like Mobile Learn from Blackboard. Then we'll have completely standalone central mobile websites with services. Not only would you possibly have something like m.wvu.edu but other folks on campus like your Libraries group will probably go that route as well. Going further right are sites like your news site or marketing that use a CMS that provides mobile templates for their content. Then, further right, will be sites that will use adaptive design, meaning just CSS tricks using media queries or the like, to provide mobile-optimized content. These will be probably be for departments on campus and the most common mobile solution.

Underlying the native apps, standalone mobile sites and even some of the template-driven mobile sites will be APIs for easily sharing content.

Why? Because we have **a lot** of content.

And why will there be so many mobile outlets on your campus? Because we have a ton of content out there.

There

Here

Monday, September 5, 2011

So if that's what we, as institutions, will grow into or become how do we get there, with all that stuff, from here, where we're basically starting at nothing. So with that it's time to introduce…

Progressive Mobile Strategy

…a progressive mobile strategy.

It's about **realistically** prioritizing mobile solutions for your institution.

A progressive mobile strategy is about realistically prioritizing mobile-focused solutions without losing too much focus on overall trends.

a

Progressive Mobile Strategy
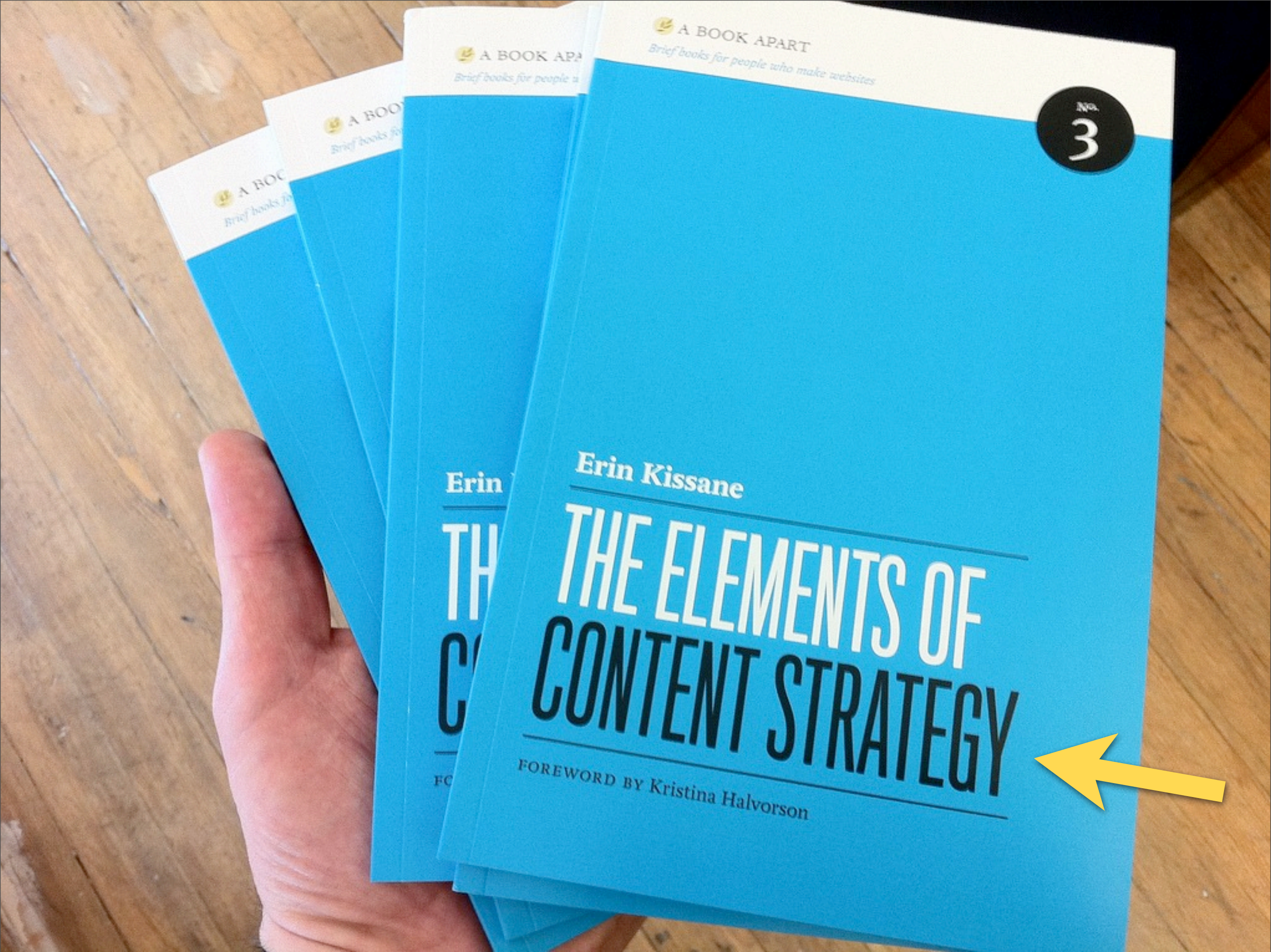
has three parts....

So a progressive mobile strategy consists of three parts.

Audience Strategy

First, an audience strategy, meaning which audiences you'll focus on first, what we know about them and their use cases. So the audience then, in turn, helps define and inform…

Monday, September 5, 2011

…a content strategy. Basically, which bits of content will you focus on first to deliver to that audience based on the use cases. And once those two things are out of the way we'll look at…

Platform Strategy

…a platform strategy, which focuses on the underlying technology and tactics, e.g. mobile web and native apps, to properly deliver the content that you've selected for your audience.

Again, the **goal** is to identify needs by reviewing audiences and content. Then, work **one-by-one** through the platform implementations.

Again, the goal is to identify needs by reviewing audience and content. Then, work one-by-one through the appropriate platform implementations. Don't let platform discussion distract from the first two parts. They're what's going to make your strategy successful.

Audience Strategy

Ok, so the first thing we have to understand as we develop our strategy is our audience. Or audiences.

The traditional higher education audiences...

Current Students

Faculty

Staff

Prospects

Alumni

Visitors

Etc.

Now in higher ed we seem to have some pretty well-defined audiences.

Let's **constrain** these audiences based on what we know about mobile users.

Note: not users that are mobile, users that are using mobile devices

Now those audiences definitely exist in mobile but we can flesh them out a little bit more based on what we know about mobile-device using users. And that's an important distinction to make.

Google's Mobile User Groups

Repetitive Now

Bored Now

Urgent Now

When Google evaluates a new mobile application one of the first things they evaluate it against are these three classes of users and tries to see how it fits in.

Google's Mobile User Groups

Repetitive Now

Bored Now

Urgent Now

The "repetitive now" user is someone checking for the same piece of information over and over again, like checking the same stock quotes or weather.

Google's Mobile User Groups

Repetitive Now

Bored Now

Urgent Now

The "bored now" are users who have time on their hands. People on trains or waiting in airports or sitting in cafes. Mobile users in this behavior group look a lot more like casual Web surfers without much user input since mobile devices still suck at that.

Google's Mobile User Groups

Repetitive Now

Bored Now

Urgent Now

And The "urgent now" is a request to find something specific fast, like the location of a bakery or directions to the airport.

Urgent Now

I would argue, without almost any supporting evidence, that most of our users or rather the main users we should be catering to in higher ed fall into the "urgent now" category. Or, rather, that as we use our tradition audiences we should stick "with an urgent need" after it.

current student…
Urgent Now

For example, "current student… urgent." That's what I mean about constraining users.

Why only urgent? The only content we have that fits into "bored now" content are press releases and someone has to be very bored to read those. News & YouTube are some of our worst performing sections. Actually, they are. And we don't have a ton of repetitive content.

I have a meeting. Where's Allen Hall?

current student...
Urgent Now

Ok so for this audience what kind of questions would they have? "where's allen hall located cause i have a meeting there?" That's an urgent now kind of task. Or"my final paper is going to be late, better call, or more likely, email the prof asking for permission."
"how do I reset my WiFi password so my laptop can get on the network?" or, finally, something like "When does my bus get here?"

All of these questions are appropriate for this audience in an urgent mode. And that's sort of how you constrain what you want your audience may want or need.

There are a couple of other things to keep in mind related to your audiences though.

I have a meeting. Where's Allen Hall?

I need to call my professor about a late
assignment...

current student...
Urgent Now

I have a meeting. Where's Allen Hall?

I need to call my professor about a late assignment...

current student...

Urgent Now

How do I reset my WiFi password?

I have a meeting. Where's Allen Hall?

I need to call my professor about a late assignment...

current student...
Urgent Now

How do I reset my WiFi password?

When does the bus get here?

Local Users

95% of smartphone users have searched for local content.

from Google's "The Mobile Movement" report, April 2011

Along with those activities our users are likely to take we can actually think about location with mobile when defining them. According to Google's report "The Mobile Movement," released in April of this year, 95% of users who were using Google search were looking for local content. So, beyond need, this notion of needing content for my general vicinity becomes a constraint. So if you're thinking alumni think visiting alumni.

Short Timeframe

88% of smartphone users took action
on a search result within a day

from Google's "The Mobile Movement" report, April 2011

In the same report 88% of smartphone users reported that they took action on their internet searches within a day. Actually, the same day of the search. So there is this compressed timeframe that people have when looking for content. These audiences are trying to do tasks that make sense in the short term. I guess this sort of reinforces that "urgent now" constraint.

Making Calls

61% of smartphone users ended up calling a business based on their search.

Tip: make your phone numbers clickable with tel:

from Google's "The Mobile Movement" report, April 2011

And a quick, interesting point that I found. 61% of folks made a phone call. This is one of those easy, go back to the office and make a quick change to make your content more mobile friendly and useful. Add that telephone numbers clickable with tel:.

Don't Focus on "On the Go"

30% of smartphone users used the
mobile internet from their couch.
90% used it from home.

from Google's "The Mobile Movement" report, April 2011

And lastly, the sort of standard comment about context and mobile audiences is that they're out and about and it turns out that that isn't the true. 30% surf from their couch while watching TV and the vast majority of users have at least used it from the home. Mobile isn't so much about on-the-go as it is about physical limitations in the device size, network limitations, and "access whenever you need it."

Audience Strategy Review

Those with Urgent Needs

Local Constituencies

Short Timeframes

Don't Focus on "On the Go"

So to quickly review, when identifying and prioritizing your audiences…

Audience Strategy Review

Those with Urgent Needs

Local Constituencies

Short Timeframes

Don't Focus on "On the Go"

focus on those with urgent needs like those I mentioned earlier.

Audience Strategy Review

Those with Urgent Needs

Local Constituencies

Short Timeframes

Don't Focus on "On the Go"

Focus on your local constituencies before external audiences with one exception that I'll get to in a little bit.

Audience Strategy Review

Those with Urgent Needs

Local Constituencies

Short Timeframes

Don't Focus on "On the Go"

focus on needs that address really short-term activities.

Audience Strategy Review
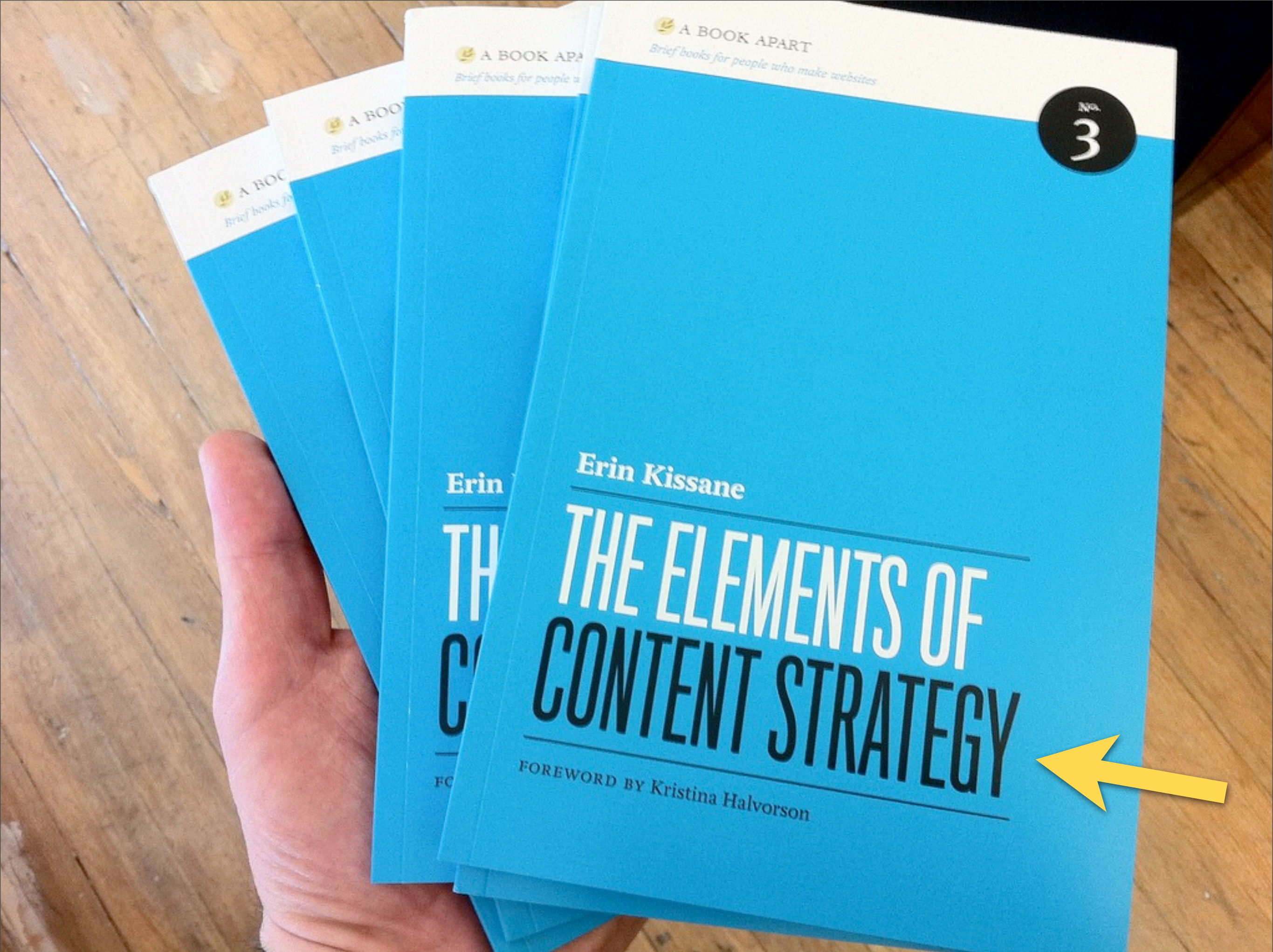
Those with Urgent Needs

Local Constituencies

Short Timeframes

Don't Focus on "On the Go"

and, finally, don't fall into the trap of thinking your audience has to be out and about or even will be out and about when accessing content. It helps but it's not required.

Monday, September 5, 2011

The next part of developing a progressive mobile strategy is the content strategy. Now that we know who we might engage with and what they might be looking for based on their circumstances or those constraints we reviewed we can figure out what they want access too…
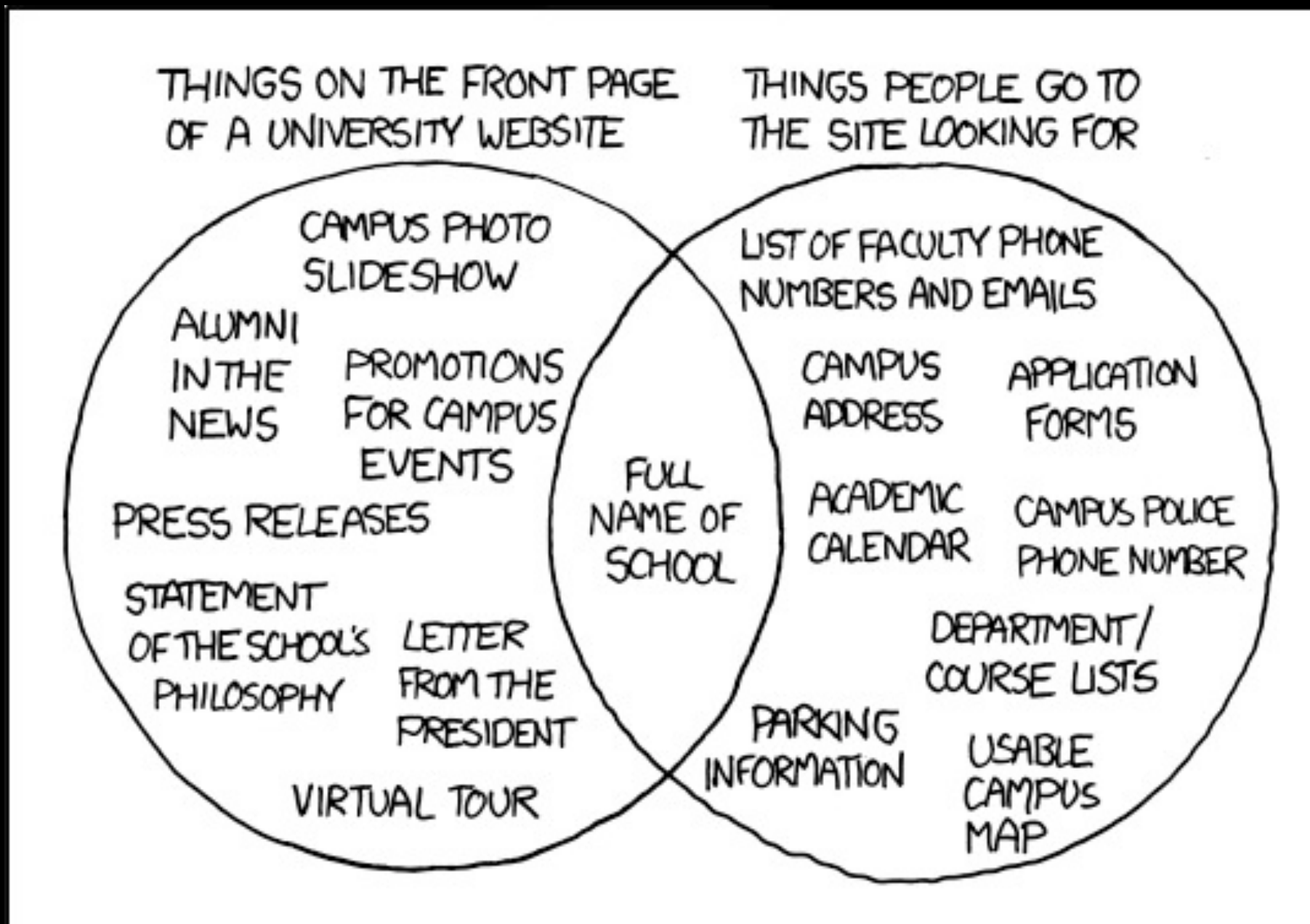
Content Delivery is Secondary to Tangible Utility

Make sure your content is useful, damn it!

Users have a specific task they want to accomplish, and frankly I think this view bleeds over to your regular website, and your mobile tools and tech has to reflect those tasks a user wants to accomplish. Finding a departments phone number easily totally outweighs reading the message from the dean. Make your content match those questions.

Which is **better**?

THINGS ON THE FRONT PAGE OF A UNIVERSITY WEBSITE

THINGS PEOPLE GO TO THE SITE LOOKING FOR

CAMPUS PHOTO SLIDESHOW

ALUMNI IN THE NEWS

PROMOTIONS FOR CAMPUS EVENTS

PRESS RELEASES

STATEMENT OF THE SCHOOL'S PHILOSOPHY

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

VIRTUAL TOUR

FULL NAME OF SCHOOL

LIST OF FACULTY PHONE NUMBERS AND EMAILS

CAMPUS ADDRESS

APPLICATION FORMS

ACADEMIC CALENDAR

CAMPUS POLICE PHONE NUMBER

DEPARTMENT/ COURSE LISTS

PARKING INFORMATION

USABLE CAMPUS MAP

↑   ↑

Content Delivery or Tangible Utility

from XKCD, http://xkcd.com/773/

This is a nice representation of content delivery, which i might think of more as bullshit content delivery, versus content that is actually useful to users. Hat tip to Steve Lewis for the suggestion on the inclusion of this graphic for properly showing the difference.

Don't Convert, Create

Mobile can be transformative for your campus. Take full advantage of that.

Use this as an opportunity to create rather than just simply converting. Developing a mobile solution isn't about just converting your home page with all of its politically dictated myriad of links or, say, your president's message and making that available to mobile users in some slimmed down method. It's really about creating a whole new organization and interface for services that make sense for mobile use. Even in a smaller form factor there are a lot of opportunities that will open for you.

Localization is Intensified

Find ways to take advantage of location-related information & relationships.

Do not underestimate the use of location data and how that can be combined with other resources. And specifically I'm talking about campus map data as it relates to something like events. All those relationships become really important and useful. This is one area we're really focused on. As well as personalization.

Content Strategy Review

Be able to answer, "What **value** will the targeted audiences get from this content?"

be able to answer the question, "What value will they gain from your content & services?" I think that's always the hope with any type of content be it mobile- or desktop-focused.

Platform Strategy

So now we're hitting the part where everyone, including me frankly, wants to start. But once you got the other two parts done, well, once you have them done in an ideal world, you can then match up platform strategy to properly implement what your audience needs and what your content supplies.

an iPhone app... ...a mobile website

vs.

So now we're down to it, which comes first? Native or mobile web?

an iPhone app...   ...a mobile website

The unfortunate thing for you is that issue is already
dead.

The question is no longer, "Which do we develop for, native **or** mobile web?" but...

The question is no longer "Which, between mobile web or native, do we develop for?"

"How do we develop solutions to handle **both** mobile web & native **now** as well as the devices of the future?"

It's "How do we develop solutions to handle both mobile web and native now and of the future that deliver the content our users are expecting?" I think we're already headed into the second phase of mobile development in higher ed. Maybe we'll call it mobile dev 2.0. It's the acceptance of the fact that there are going to be a lot of different solutions.
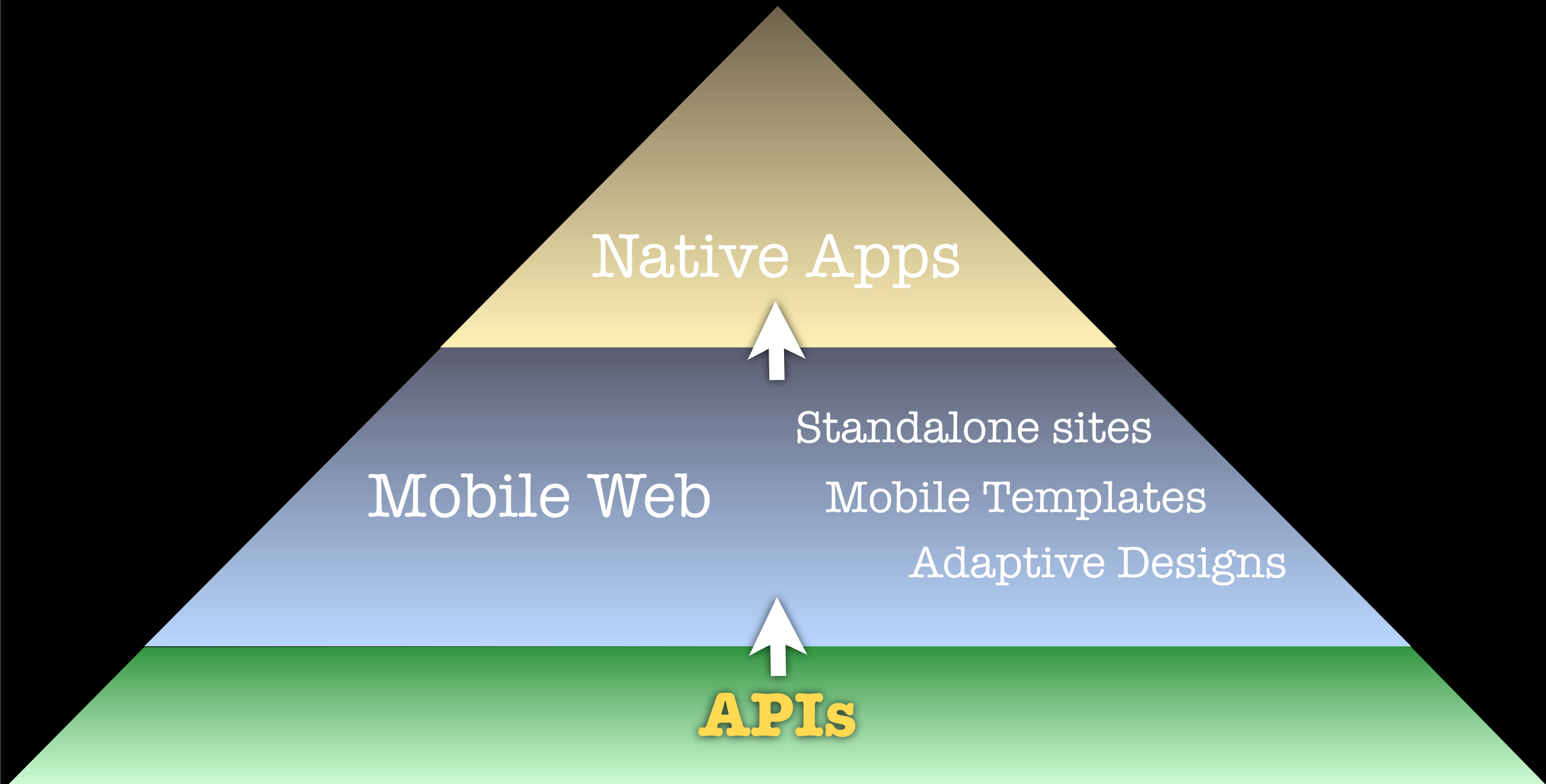
A poor representation of the ideal platform strategy...

Native Apps

Mobile Web

Standalone sites

Mobile Templates

Adaptive Designs

APIs
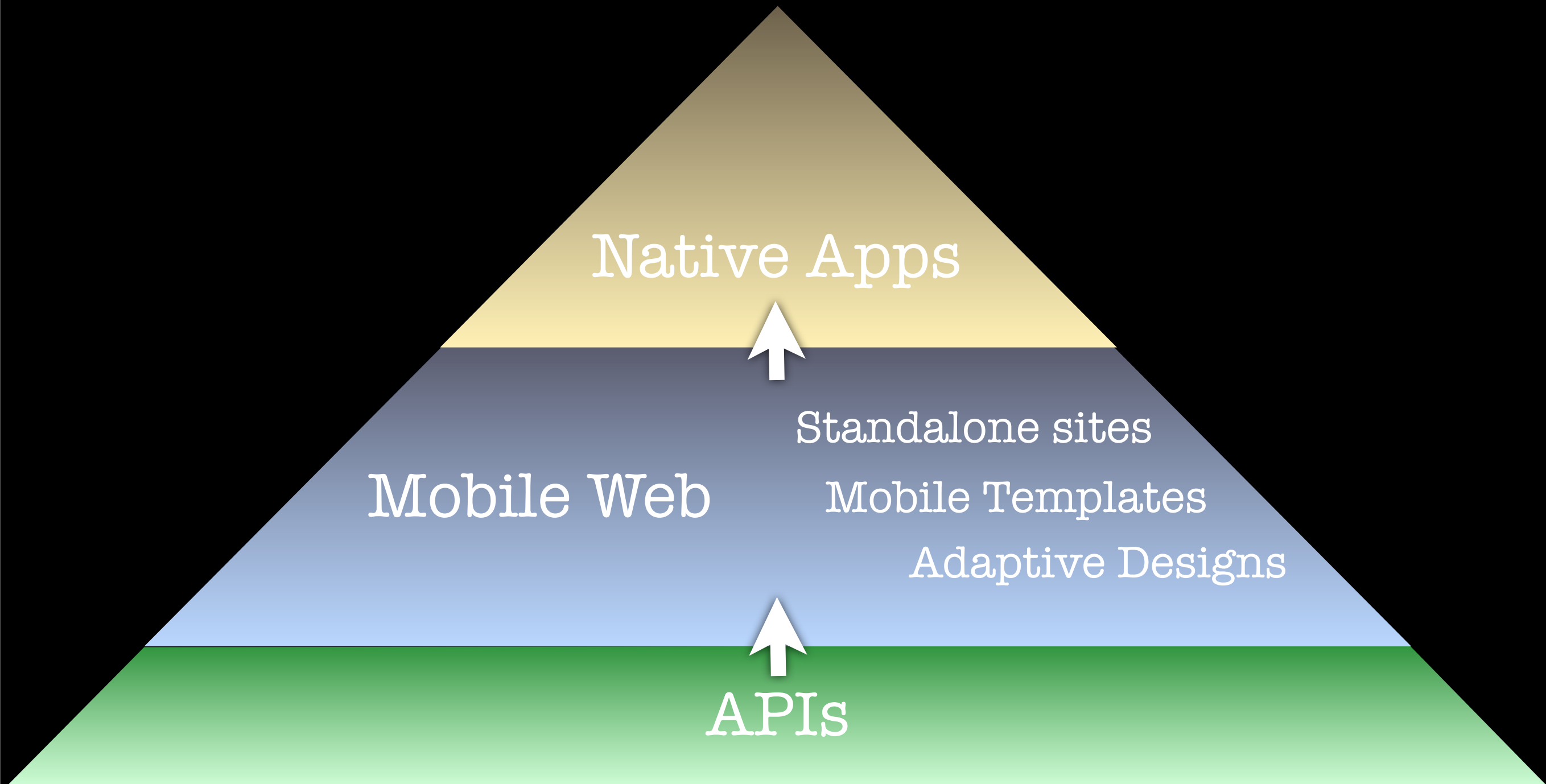
In an absolute ideal world your implementation of your campus' mobile platform strategy would probably follow a trend like this. And, yes, I'm completely embarrassed by this graphic.

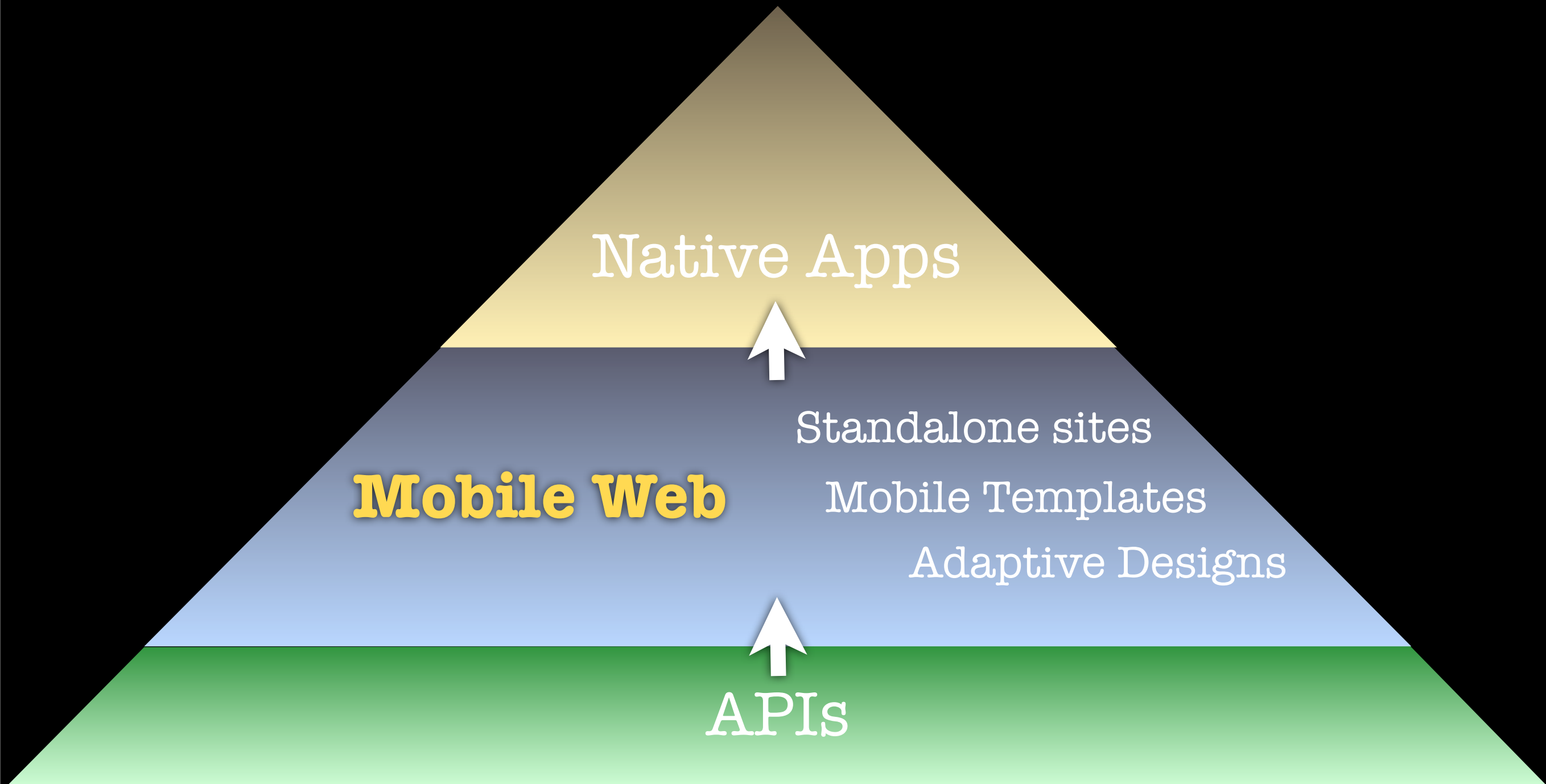# A poor representation of the ideal platform strategy...

Native Apps

Mobile Web

Standalone sites

Mobile Templates

Adaptive Designs

APIs

We'd start with the building blocks for a flexible strategy by developing APIs.
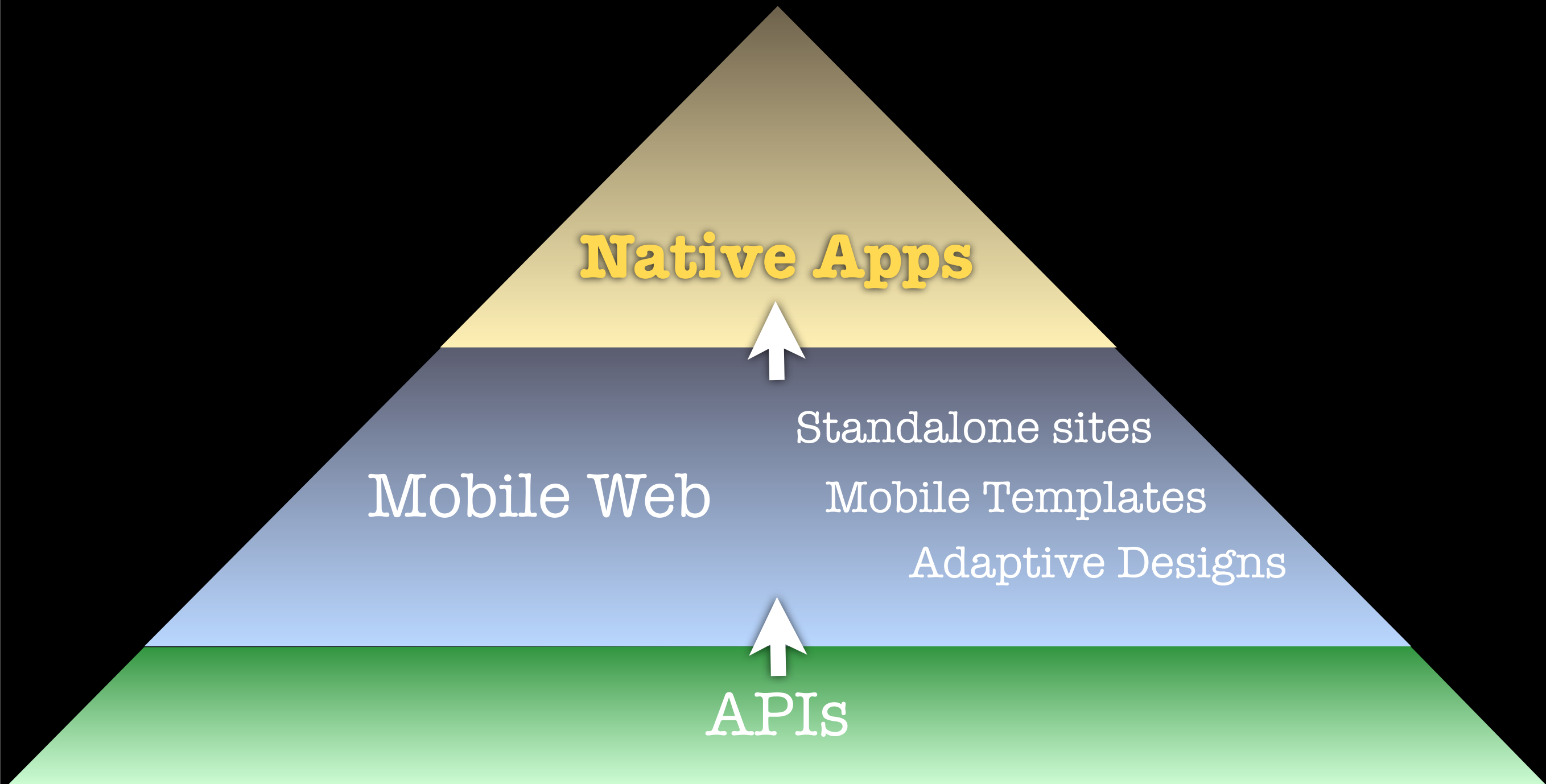
A poor representation of the ideal platform strategy...

Native Apps

Mobile Web

Standalone sites

Mobile Templates

Adaptive Designs

APIs

Monday, September 5, 2011

Then we'd build our mobile web solutions on top of these APIs to deliver information to as many devices as possible using the tools & techniques that your staff are familiar with or, at the very least, their shouldn't to terribly much of a learning curve.

And note that there is even a progressive path through mobile web starting with adaptive design at the bottom through to…

…mobile portals with lots of interactivity & content all designed specifically for a mobile device and using device detection to modify the look server-side making it really adaptable to the client requesting the site.

A poor representation of the ideal platform strategy...

Native Apps

Mobile Web

Standalone sites

Mobile Templates

Adaptive Designs

APIs

Monday, September 5, 2011

Then we could focus on native solutions to refine and provide the best quality solutions on a per operating system basis. And native apps would leverage the API as well.

A poor representation of the ideal platform strategy...

Native Apps

Mobile Web

Standalone sites

Mobile Templates

Adaptive Designs
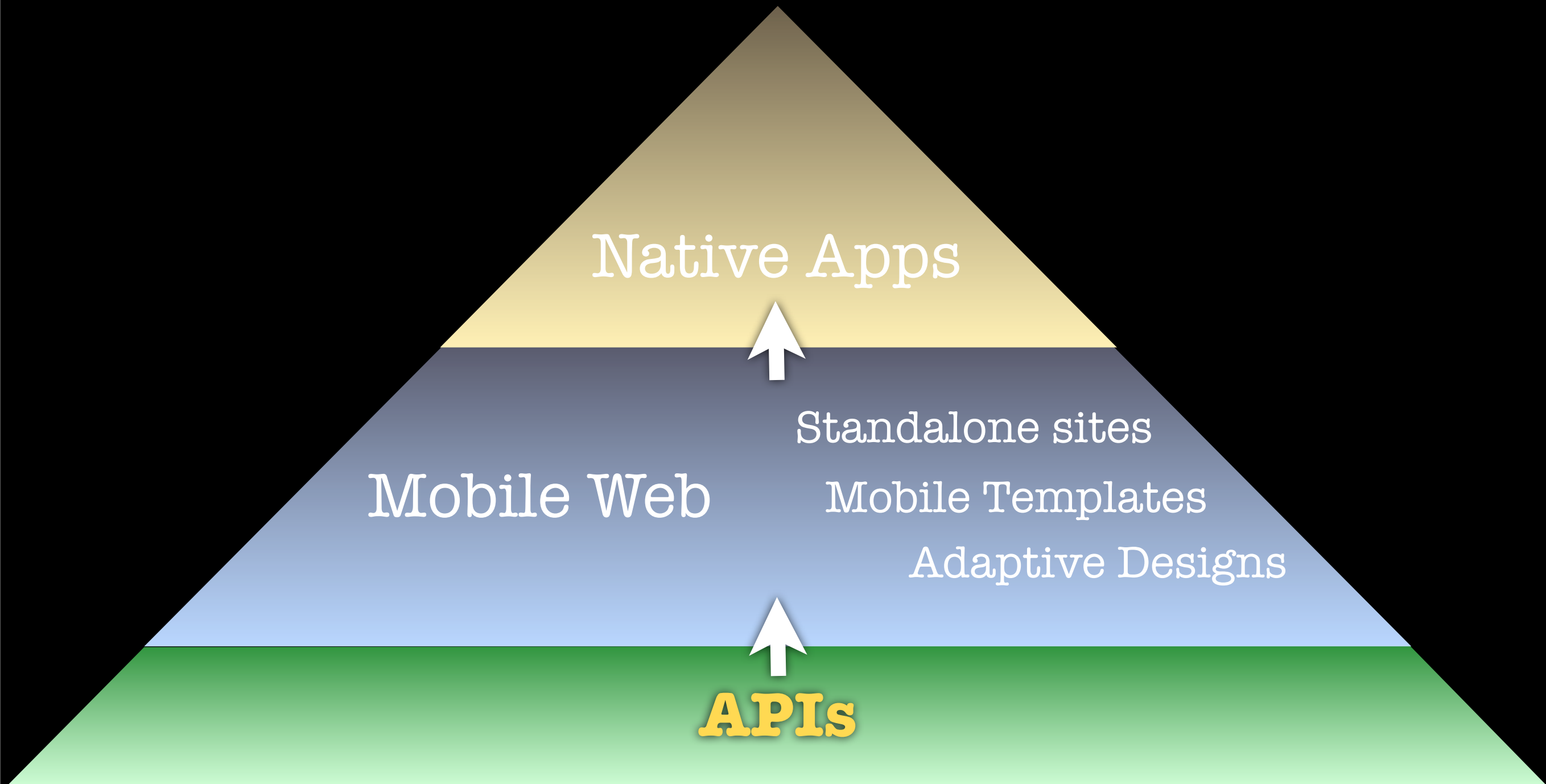
APIs

So, in a nutshell, that's the ideal platform strategy for an institution in my opinion. Even if it's a little ugly looking. So let's start with the core and base part of the platform strategy, the APIs.

def. **APIs**

stands for Application Programming Interface. APIs allow one program to talk to another program in an agreed-upon format to send & receive data.

API stands for Application Programming Interface. Essentially APIs allow one program to another one and send or receive data in an agreed-upon format. You might also term these web services.

APIs are the **infrastructure** for your mobile initiatives...

Create Once, Publish Everywhere

APIs are the infrastructure we need to create, the plumbing or the highways as it were, that will not only handle mobile but any future content-delivery format needs we have. Say, TVs or digital signage for example? At the end of the day, APIs allow us to create once and publish everywhere. I can't stress enough how important APIs will be to your institution in terms of delivering viable, maintainable, and useful mobile solutions.

PRT API
Update once. Publishes to:
iOS App,
Mobile Website,
Student Portal,
Transportation Website, &
Twitter

Monday, September 5, 2011

So a quick example of how we're using APIs at WVU for our PRT system. WVU is split into three campuses and to connect them we have this little tram system, the PRT, which students can take to get from one campus to another. It was built in the 60s and, unfortunately, it's showing it's age. It'll break down every now and then. Now, in the past, a student only learned that the PRT was down by going to the station. Based on a student idea we worked with the PRT folks to gather that data to display on our mobile website. So we created an API for it. Transportation folks update it in one spot and, via JSON & XML it gets published to all of these locations instantly. And if we need to bring in another site or digital signage we just point it at the JSON or XML feed and we're good to go.

Feeding the Beast: Fostering an API Culture @ HighEdWeb Austin

If APIs interest you and if you're going to HighEdWeb in Austin their will be a talk by Erik Runyon and Jeremy Friesen from the University of Notre Dame on them. I'm sure it'll be a killer talk as those guys are always doing great work. Seriously, it's really important stuff so check it out.

A poor representation of the ideal platform strategy...

Native Apps

Mobile Web
Standalone sites
Mobile Templates
Adaptive Designs
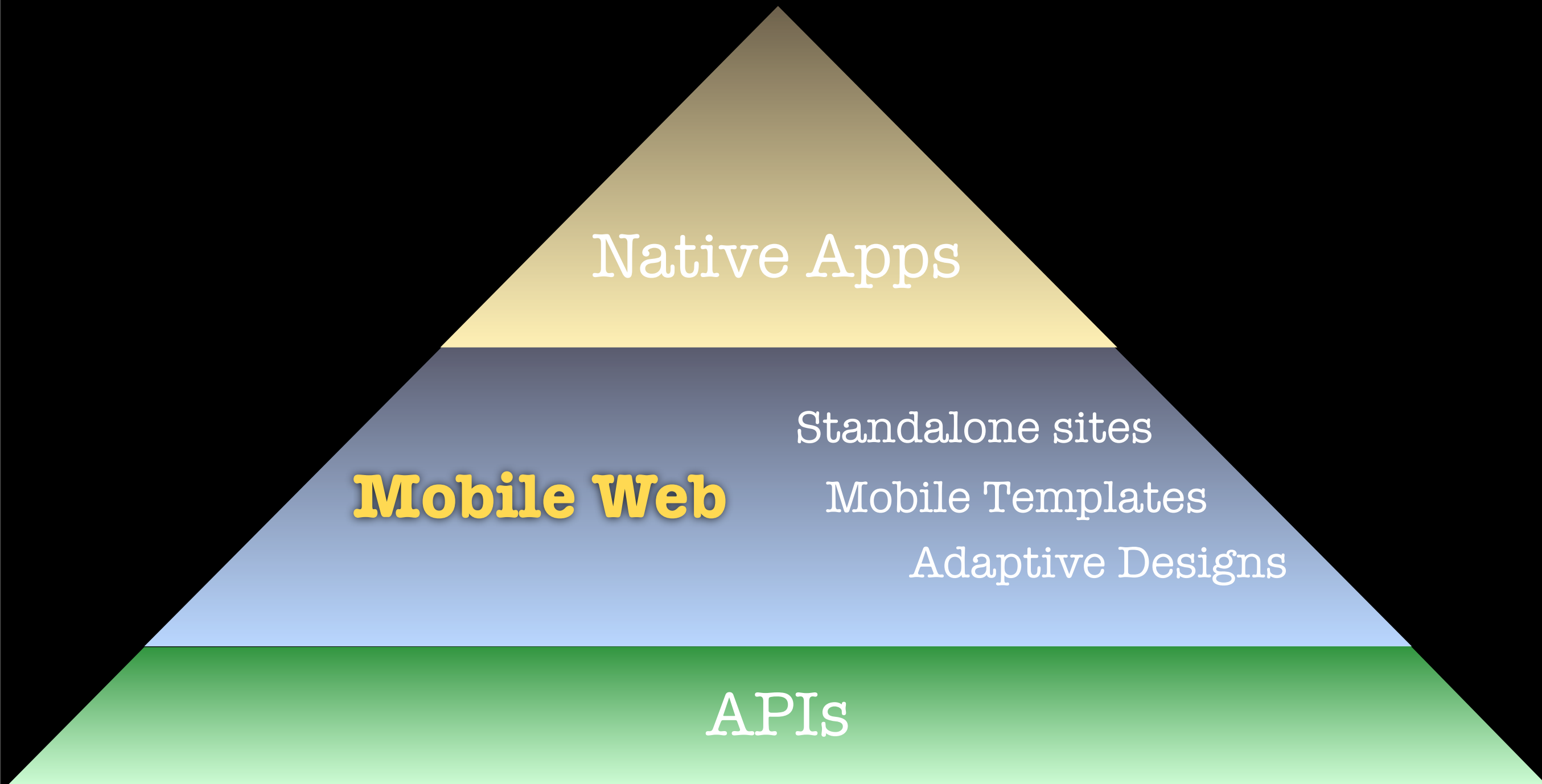
APIs

Obviously that's the ideal and that's not going to be the way most schools work right from the get go. We certainly didn't. That being said, learn from our experience it's much tougher to retrofit APIs to these kind of things than it is to just know you have to do that from the start.

Once we move from APIs and look at the next step in our platform strategy, which, for me, is mobile web. I know I said earlier that a platform strategy wasn't an either/or but you have to start somewhere. It just happens to start in the place that I happen to value, mobile web.
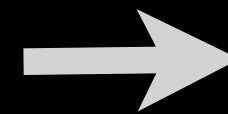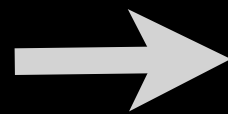
Mobile Web-Optimized Solutions

adaptive designs

mobile templates

standalone mobile sites

As I noted earlier there is actually a progressive strategy for mobile web as well moving from adaptive designs to CMS-based mobile templates and finally to standalone mobile sites.

Making the case for **mobile web first**.

So I guess I should make the case for mobile web first and I think I have two pretty good reasons. And, again, this isn't an argument for a standalone mobile website, this is an argument for anyone of the viable mobile web solutions I just reviewed.

"Not every mobile device will have your app on it but every mobile device will have a **browser**."

- Jason Grigsby, @grigs

This quote is from Jason Grigsby, one of the two guys who led President Obama's 2008 election iPhone app. It hits on the first killer feature of mobile devices and why mobile web comes first because of that feature.

In that moment of urgent need where will a user turn? Assuming they don't already have your apps, and that's plural because one app will never be able to handle all your use cases, the user will use their browser to get to the resources they're used to accessing on the desktop. They're already familiar with the fact that we have that content out there on the web.
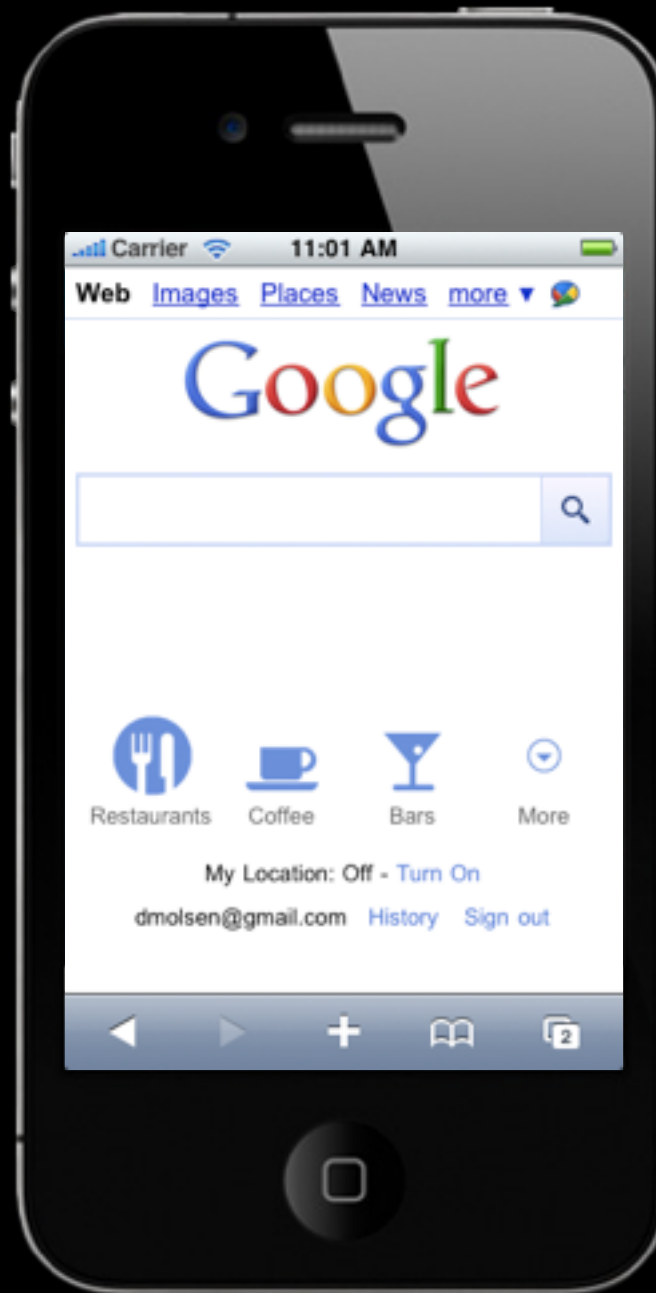
Monday, September 5, 2011

While a little anecdotal, I went with my family to New York City. We got into the city just fine but we never looked up departure times. So as we're walking around NYC realizing this we whip out our phones and… search the web. We didn't get an app. I didn't even think about getting an app until I got back to the hotel that night.

I just really wanted a reason to include that amazing photo. True story though.

77% of smartphone users use search. Most visited type of website.

from Google's "The Mobile Movement" report, April 2011

Monday, September 5, 2011

And a little more support for that anecdotal evidence though... According to Google's report "The Mobile Movement" released in April of this year 77% of smartphone users reported visiting search engine websites. They are the most visited type of website by mobile users.

remember those
Urgent Now
users?

Remember our urgent users? Think they might go to use search in the heat of the moment in their browser that's included on the device?

And all of our **content**?

And remember all that content that we already have out there that Google and the other search engines have already indexed for us to give to that user when they search to get the answer to their urgent need? And the user probably already knows it's out there?
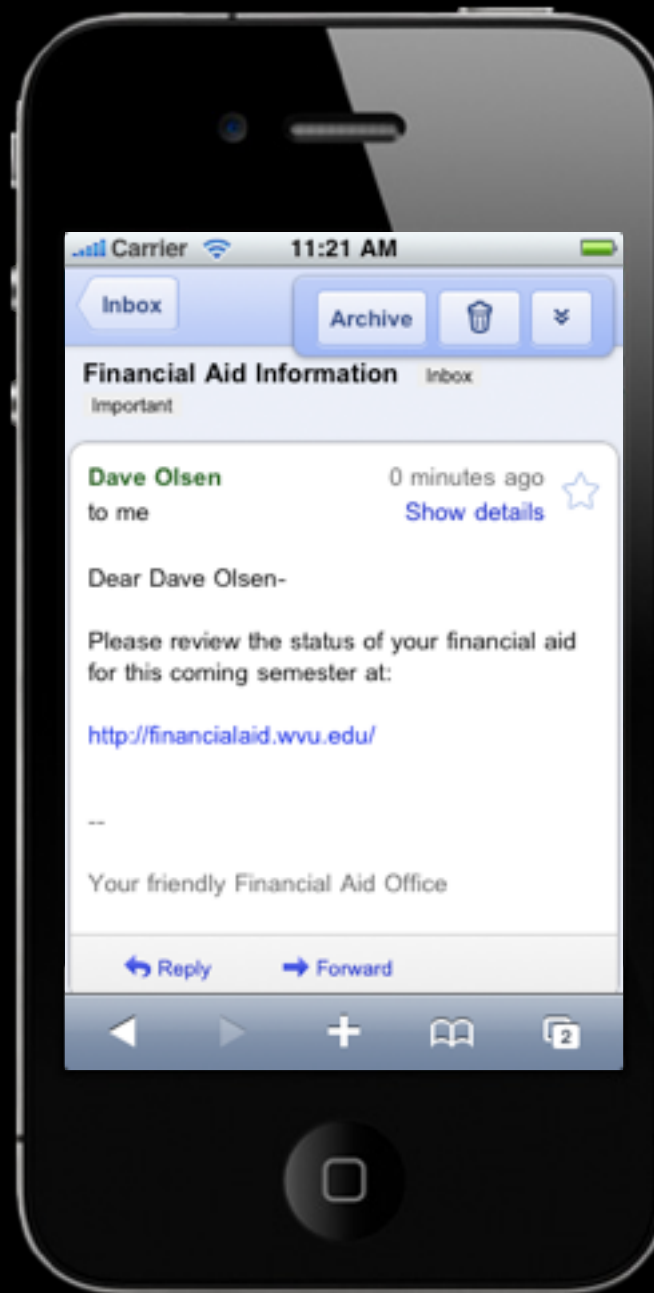
So that's reason #1.

"Links **don't** open apps."
- Jason Grigsby, @grigs

The second quality quote from Jason is, "Links don't open apps."

55% of users with an internet-enabled phone use it to check personal email.

from Merkle's "View from the Digital Inbox" report, January 2011

Does your school send out HTML emails with links to your content? Maybe to prospective students? Ever consider they might try to visit that content from a mobile device? Well, 55% of users with internet-enabled phones check their personal email on them.

Getting **social**?

Is social media a big component of your marketing efforts. Social networking sites are way up there in terms of use from a mobile device. Those links you share on Facebook or Twitter may have a decent likelihood of being opened on a mobile device.
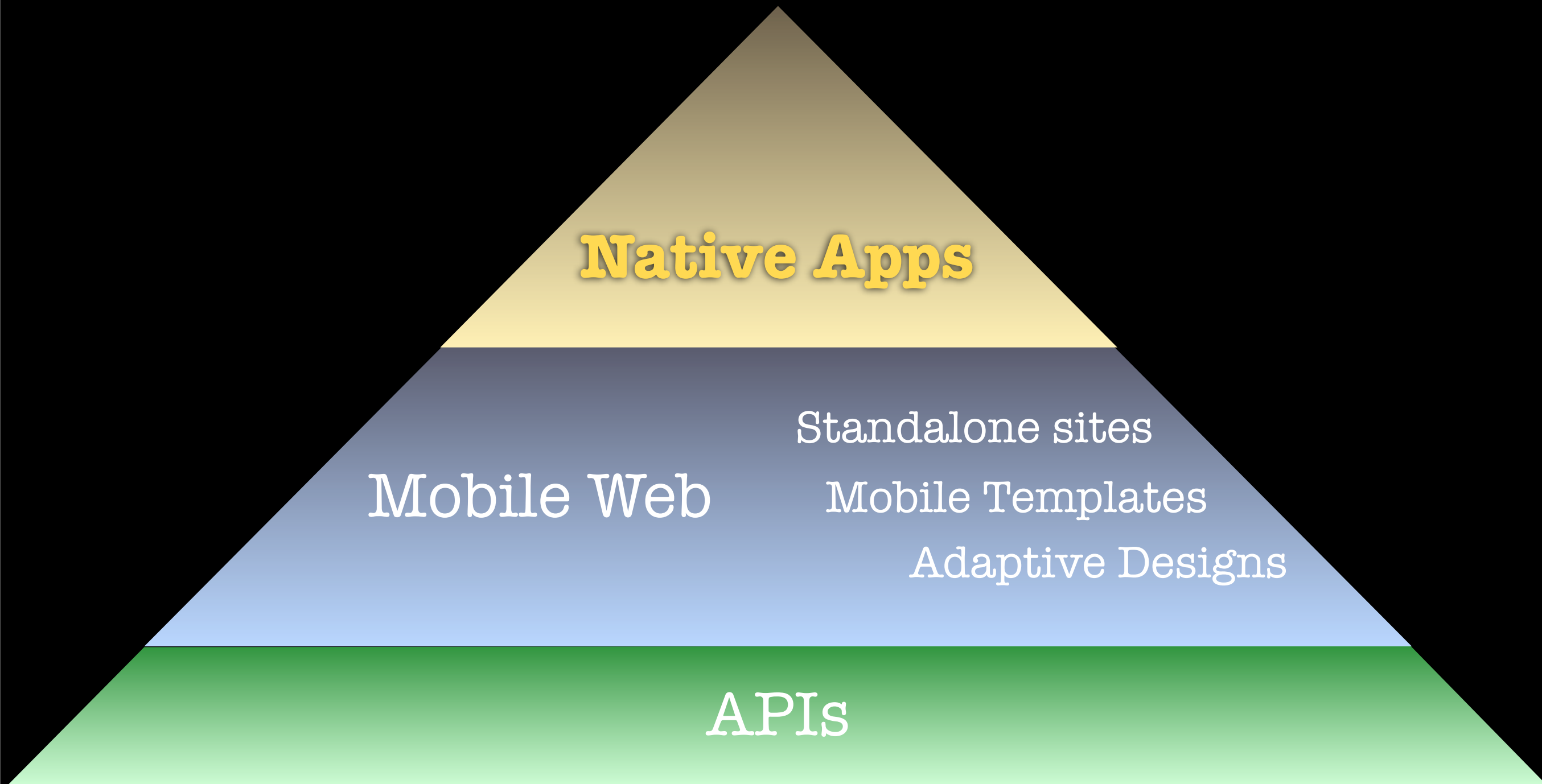
search + links = **mobile web first**

So combining the browser, especially with it's all important search box, to the built-in email client and links you might send you can see why it's so important to provide mobile web-optimized content.

A poor representation of the ideal platform strategy...

Native Apps

Mobile Web

Standalone sites

Mobile Templates

Adaptive Designs

APIs

So then the next step in a mobile platform are native apps. Again, these are the apps you're going to download through the iTunes Store or Android Marketplace.
I'm not naïve enough to think that mobile web can handle every need a school will have.

Native apps will be driven by vendors.

Frankly, vendors for systems like your learning management system are going to be the ones to bring native apps to your school. Or at least the most likely avenue for that. You may also have an opportunity to bring this kind of work in-house but I have a feeling that vendors will drive native app adoption at schools.

Native apps
should be transformative.

The other place I see native apps being leveraged more than mobile web are in the absolute, bleeding edge cases for transforming how business is done on campus. More revolutionary than evolutionary. A decent example of this might be replacing student Ids with mobile devices equipped with near field communications or NFC technology.

Platform Strategy Review

Start working on your infrastructure. Now.

We have a lot of content & users
expect access to it.

There isn't one mobile solution for
higher education.

So that's our mobile platform strategy that's a part of our larger progressive mobile strategy. Start working on or planning to work on your infrastructure now. So read that as APIs. We already have a lot of content that has been crawled by search engines and users will be looking for it. There is no right mobile solution platform-wise for higher ed. You're going to end up using all of them.

Wrapping
it all up...

Ok, so to wrap all of this up we'll go through a quick example…

1. Identify the **audience**.

So looking at our standard higher ed audiences and adding what we learned from the Google reports we know we should focus on local users who are looking for things they need right now. So I'll take current students as the first audience I want to address with my strategy.

2. Identify the **content** for that audience.

Then we address the content needs for that user. What would they be interested in? What can we provide? What tasks do they want to accomplish? Campus map. Directory. Emergency information.
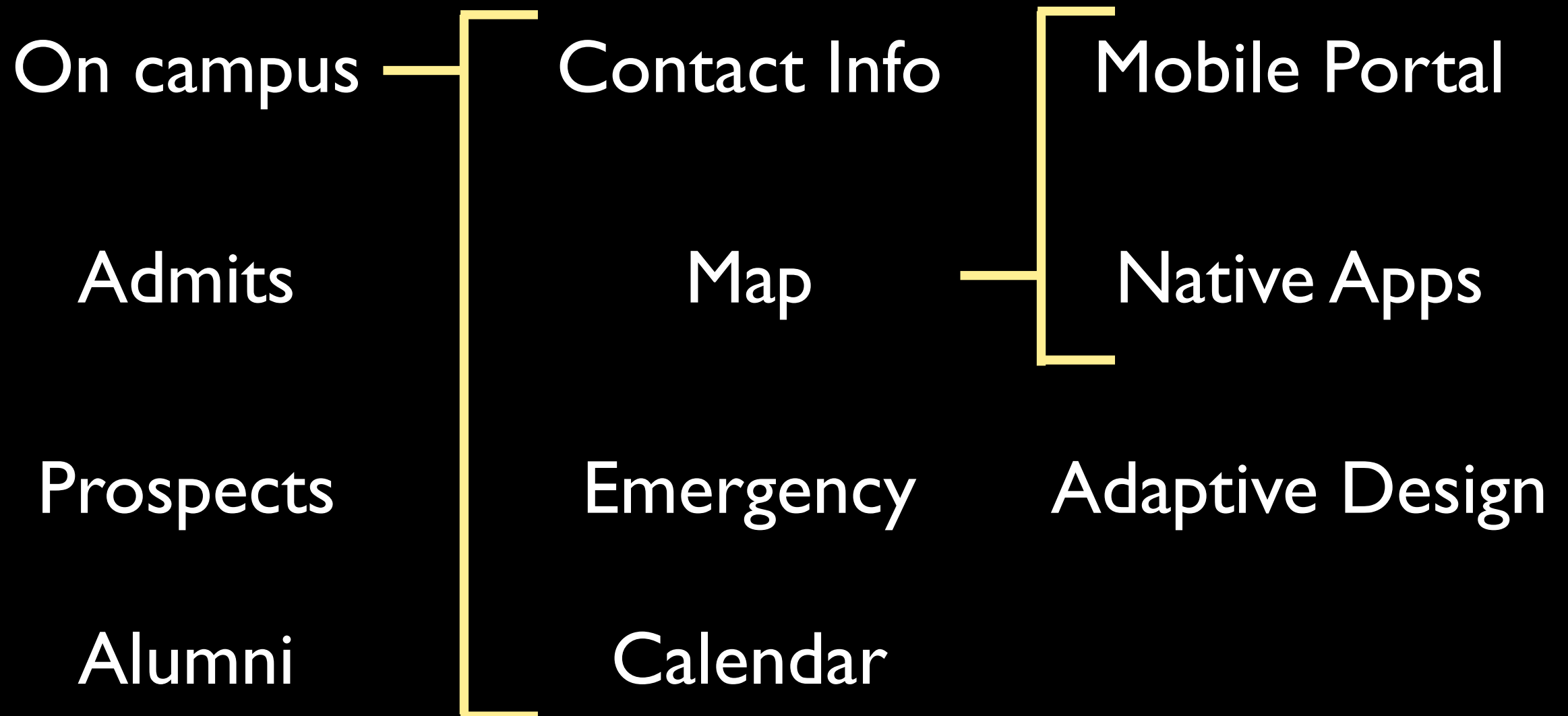
3. Implement **platform** solutions.

And last we evaluate and implement platform solutions that match up with our needs.

Audience	Content	Platform
On campus	Contact Info	Mobile Portal
Admits	Map	Native Apps
Prospects	Emergency	Adaptive Design
Alumni	Calendar	

I couldn't come up with a decent way to lay this out but... the notion is to prioritize audiences you want to deliver to in the left column. Then the types of content that make sense to them based on what we learned about audience. And then, finally, figure out what type of platform best fits that content to maeks ure we propersly deliver it.

Don't get **stuck** on platform.
Focus on your targeted audiences & content.
That'll tell you which platform to use.

and to continue to beat a dead horse. Don't get stuck on platform implementation. That's the wrong place to start. Focus instead on your targeted audiences and content. That will lead you naturally into the appropriate platform solutions.

Resources

Blog & Higher Ed Mobile Directory
dmolsen.com

Resources

Higher Ed Mobile Frameworks

kurogo.org
mobilewebosp.pbworks.com
mollyproject.org
mwf.ucla.edu
www.jasig.org/umobile

Thanks, flickr

Bookshelf by dolmansaxlil
Lego Toy by L D M
Dictionary by Pim Fijneman
Mobile on Paper by morgamic
Japanese Subway Riders by Josh Liba
Call from Mountaintop by publicenergy
Girl on Stoop by ollipitkanen
Student Recording Video by U. of Denver
Student in Classroom by Bill Erickson
Grand Central Station by Chris Schoenbohm
Globe by Nick Aldwin
Flickr by dsevilla

Road to Ribblesdale by Luc B
Audience by batmoo
Drupalcon by Mike Gifford
Highway Lights by Spreng Ben
Blackboard (pattern) by Parée
Blackboard by Rainer Ebert
Tunnel by Éole
Christmas Present by kevindooley
Mud by Steve Wall
Superman T-Shirt by thelastminute
Calendars by Duane Mendoza
Clouds by Francisco Martins

and **many thanks** to Mr. Robertson
for the snazzy device graphics...

The End

thanks