

Dear readers,

“Get in the game. Go mobile!”

That was the News-Register’s slogan a little more than a year ago as we set sail on a whole new venture into the mobile realm. With the aid and support of the Nebraska Press Association and a third-party vendor from Wisconsin, we planted our flag on a new frontier, launching a mobile website of our very own.

It was a pretty handy tool, we soon discovered, allowing our staff to offer breaking news, photos and even video to anyone carrying a smartphone. Within a few weeks, we had several hundred visitors a day scanning our QR code and checking out our site. The goal was to provide headlines and breaking news of the day, then invite readers to our print or e-edition for more details.

All the media trends and Google statistics suggest that was a good strategy for the News-Register. Just as millions of Americans began looking to the World Wide Web for information 15 or so years ago, the paradigm is shifting again, this time toward hand-held mobile devices. The number of smartphones is quadrupling every two years, we have recently learned, and more than 50 percent of online searches are now done on a mobile device. That’s an audience we want to reach.

We firmly believe that mobile is now part of the News-Register’s delivery system, though our strategy has hit a little bump in the road.

That third-party vendor who promised the world at a Nebraska Press Association retreat right here in Aurora went belly up this month, giving us very little notice. Just like that, the vehicle we had grown to count on as a means of reaching you in a new and high-tech format crashed and burned.

We fully intend to launch a new and improved mobile product one day soon, though that will take some time. We appreciate your patience and will keep you posted.

This little detour wasn’t terribly expensive, but it was an eye-opener.

This new world of social media and digital delivery is in fact ripe with opportunity, though it is also prone to frequent change. As much as many of us grow to count on that new whiz bang smartphone, for example, the reality is that it will wear out, break or become obsolete within two or three years at best.

That trend apparently applies to tech-based start-up companies as well. The trick, as newspaper publishers, is figuring out how to find the right partner to keep you on the leading edge, not the bleeding edge, of technology.

As always, you can count on getting the printed version of your hometown newspaper in the near and distance future. That is a tried and true tradition not subject to change. We will also continue to post headlines and news briefs on Facebook and Twitter, inviting you to our print and e-edition versions for the rest of the story.

As for going mobile, stay tuned.

KURT JOHNSON can be reached at kjohnson@hamilton.net

