

## **Notes from *Web Style Guide (2<sup>nd</sup>)* Chapter 1, "Process"**

### **Site Purpose and Design**

One of the first steps to developing a Web site involves general planning with regard to purpose and audience. *Web Style Guide* (WSG) recommends designers consider the following issues. Following each issue are some prompts to use when analyzing a site for content and design (or form):

### **Identify Your Goals (and Roles)**

1. What content do you want to provide?
2. What is your timeline, from development through user-testing?
3. How will you evaluate success of the site?
4. What roles will there be for the Web development team? (Writers, designers, user-testers, etc.)

### **Identify your target audience**

5. Who is the site's target audience? Primary audience? Subsidiary audience(s)?
6. Is that audience explicitly named or not? If not, how do you know who it is?
7. Based on its navigational design and use of browser technology, will the site be targeted to novice or "power users"?
8. Will the site make any appeals to casual web surfers? If so, how? If not, why not?

### **Design critiques**

9. What successful models might help you guide site development?
10. Try to see the design problem from the site user's point of view.

### **Have a statement of purpose**

11. Will the purposes of the site be explicitly stated? If so, what are they? If not, will they be evident from the content and design?
12. What will the site offer with regard to Training, Reference, Teaching, or Education? Will it specialize in one or more purposes? What will its primary purpose be?
13. What other purposes might there be for a site? (E.g., entertainment, business, promotion, etc.)

### **Content inventory**

14. Briefly describe the nature of the information you will present at the site.
15. How will this information help achieve the site's objectives?
16. Will this information be presented in the form of a site map or set of FAQs?
17. Does the site offer links that take the user off-site? Are these collected separately from the site content or are they integrated?

### **Pulling It All Together: Developing a Site Specification**

"The site specification is the planning team's concise statement of core goals, values, and intent, to provide the ultimate policy direction for everything that comes next"

(WSG online). The Site Specification document should include information about the scope of the content, the budget, the schedule, and technical aspects of the site (including where it will be hosted). In addition, teams should address these questions in this document:

### **Goals and strategies**

1. What is the mission of your organization?
2. How will creating a Web site support your mission?
3. What are your two or three most important goals for the site?
4. Who is the primary audience for the Web site?
5. What do you want the audience to think or do after having visited your site?
6. What Web-related strategies will you use to achieve those goals?
7. How will you measure the success of your site?
8. How will you adequately maintain the finished site? (See #6 below also.)
9. How will you promote the site?

### **Production issues**

10. How many nodes will the site contain? What is the maximum acceptable count under your budget or time constraints?
11. What special technical or functional requirements are needed?
12. What is the budget for the site?
13. What is the production schedule for the site, including intermediate milestones and dates?
14. Who are the people or vendors on the development team and what are their responsibilities?
15. What provisions can you make now for future development and maintenance of the site?

### **Site Development Issues**

Throughout the development of a Web site, you'll likely need to pass through these major stages:

- Site definition and planning (site specification)
- Information architecture (development of prototypes, use of models, storyboarding, major interface questions, navigation, folder structure)
- Site design (page grid, page design, graphic design standards, templates)
- Site construction (complete navigational elements, add content, user-testing)
- Site marketing (advertising the URL, search engines, meta-tags)
- Tracking, evaluation, and maintenance (tracking issues, archiving, feedback)

### Questions about the Approach in WSG

As will any guide, WSG adopts a particular philosophy toward its subject. You should spend some time thinking about the advice this book and associated Web site provide. Advice about anything, but perhaps especially about writing and composing, relies on underlying principles and observations that warrant the advice itself. It's important that you understand these principles and observations not just so that you can evaluate the quality of the advice, but also so you can generate good decisions on our own, using the principles and observations your own experience teaches you.

1. What evidence or experience does the guide rely on in drawing its conclusions about Web style and site design?
2. The phrase "Internet Time" refers to the accelerated pace of innovation, design, and technologies for the WWW. In Internet Time, how dated is the evidence, experience, and audience analysis used by WSG's authors? What, if anything, has changed with regard to typical users and/or general site purposes?
3. According to WSG, what is the primary motivating factor in selecting site design and content?
4. Why do you think WSG recommends creating printable versions of certain information?
5. What is effective about the design and content of the WSG site?
6. How would you respond to this guiding statement of purpose?

"Today, the field of Web design is seen much more as a craft than an art, where function takes precedence over form and content is king. Innovative designs using fancy navigational doodads are generally seen as an annoyance standing between the user and what he or she seeks. Large graphic eye-candy, no matter how pleasing, is simply wasted bandwidth. Like 1960s architecture, much of yesterday's Web design now makes users wince and wonder how it could ever have been fashionable. Instead, today's Web designers are also information architects and usability engineers, and a user-centered design approach is the key to a successful Web site. Instead of constantly requiring users to relearn the Web, sites are beginning to look more alike and to employ the same metaphors and conventions. The Web has now become an everyday thing whose design should not make users think."  
(WSG, "Preface to the Second Edition")

Prepared by David Blakesley  
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