Designing An Effective Web Presentation: a Practical Guide to Preparing and Implementing Web Content for the Communications Professional

Joseph Messina

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DESIGNING AN EFFECTIVE WEB PRESENTATION
A Practical Guide to Preparing and Implementing Web Content for
the Communications Professional

Written By Joseph Messina
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2003
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I. PREFACE

The World Wide Web is a pervasive force in the realm of communication. Over the past decade, millions of people, young and old, have added “www” and “.com” to their vocabulary. No other medium has the power to disseminate such a grandiose wealth of knowledge to anyone in the world, while providing access at all times. For instance, one can view information about any company, product, or service on the Web with the click of a mouse with no regard for time or place. It has become routine that during business conversation, people almost immediately ask questions such as “What is your email address?” or “What is your Web site address?” The Web has revolutionized the exchange of information with its convenience, speed, and ubiquity. This revolution, although lending itself to a fascinating and incredibly useful tool, has caused radical changes in the way businesses communicate. This vital tool is rapidly replacing the telephone and printed marketing materials as the first impression a company portrays to potential clients.

In essence, the Web has made an already fast paced communication world even faster. People use the Web with little patience, scanning through pages for information as fast as their Internet connections can load them onto their screens. “A single screen— to which a person viewing a Web page devotes, on average, 6.8 seconds— must often carry the bulk of the company’s message. If the initial presentation is emotionally and mentally pleasing, people will continue to read. If not, they will leave the Web site” (Conger and Mason, 1998, p.8). For this reason, it is imperative for business communicators, who wish to use Web, to recognize the limitations as well as the
strengths of the medium in order to successfully establish a presence in the global marketplace.

Objectives

The purpose of this Thesis is to offer communications professionals design principles for creating clear, concise, and high impact web presentations for small businesses. These principles will be applied to the creation of a web presentation known as the "electronic brochure". Its purpose is to use the Web to communicate a professional first impression, engage users to read further through the presentation and establish relationships with the organization. In other words - use the web to increase revenue.

Chapter II of the Thesis functions as a prelude to design by providing a basic understanding of the World Wide Web. It explains the Web's history and rapid evolution into a viable multimedia publishing medium. The chapter then elucidates the Web’s fundamental technology for incorporation into the communications professional's perspective. The goals of a Web presentation are then defined to segue the process of creating self-explanatory and visually pleasing designs.

Chapter III dissects the various components of Web design. It explains how they are implemented to create a presentation that will satisfy the designer's goals while meeting the needs of individuals using the site. It provides detailed information on how to plan a Web site, organize information, and create page layouts within the limitations of the technology.
Chapter IV offers a description of the primary research. It explains the methodology of a survey used to gather information from typical Web users, designers by occupation, and small business owners. The purpose of the survey was to determine what elements are preferred for use in Web sites.

Chapter V is a culmination of research gathered from established sources and an analysis of the results of the survey. This culmination will be pragmatically implemented in the design of a small business Web site for the Polish American Care Agency. It will outline the step-by-step process of the Web site's creation. The completed Web site can be viewed live at www.PolishCare.com.

Chapter VI concludes with advice on marketing the Web site. It encourages maintaining the Web site with up to date and relevant content, and how constant research of what is published on the Web is the easiest way to identify trends. It ends with a look at the future of Web design and how it is affected by broadband Internet access.

Research Question

The previously stated objectives will answer the following:

What are the principles a communications professional must use to design a Web site for a small business that is:

1. professional, defined by a proper use of visual effects and relevant copy placed logically in a Web site that is free of error?

2. easy to use and navigate, meaning the most inexperienced user can easily obtain information from the site?

3. clear and engaging, characterized by interesting imagery and written material
that draws the user into the presentation?

4. effective in establishing relationships with clients, increasing the company’s client base and overall profitability?

Subsidiary Questions

In order to fully realize these objectives, the answers to these subsidiary questions will also be provided throughout the course of this Thesis:

1. How does an effective Web site benefit the communication process?

2. How does the typical Web user locate, perceive, and use information from the Web.

3. What are the techniques used to create an effective Web site?

4. Why is a Web site its own animal, differing from other media in its design?

5. What is the level of experience a designer should expect from potential visitors of the site, and how does this affect a Web design?

6. How should graphics be incorporated into a design?

7. How and why should copy be written and edited to be brief and clear?

8. How should multimedia be used to enhance, not detract from the presentation, or should it be used at all?

9. How is a Web site marketed?

10. What are the methods of maintaining a current Web site that will withstand rapidly changing trends?
Definition of Terms

Bandwidth - The rate of data transfer for an electronic communications system

Browser – A program used by a computer to locate, display, and interact with the World Wide Web (Microsoft Internet Explorer for example).

Byte – The unit of eight bits used to measure computer storage capacity.

Electronic Brochure – A Web site that showcases a company’s services, providing information and marketing via the World Wide Web.

Graphic – An image displayed on a computer screen.

Home Page – The first page of a Web site.

Hyperlink – An electronic link providing direct access from one distinctively marked place in a Web site to another in the same site, or another site on the Web.

Information Architecture – A clearly defined organization of the content of a Web site and how the content is hyperlinked.

Internet – A huge network of computers allowing users around the world to exchange information and resources.

Loading Time – The amount of time required to display a Web page in its entirety once it has been accessed from the Web.

Multimedia – Communications media (text, graphics, sound, animation, video, and more) combined for use in a single Web site.

Navigation – The method by which a user of a Web site accesses and progresses through the Web presentation.

Surfer – Millions of people who access and see what the World Wide Web has to offer.
Uniform Resource Locator (URL) – An address that specifies where on the Internet a particular resource is stored. Each Web page has its own URL, as do hyperlinked media.

User – An individual who turn to the Web for information.

Viewer – Former surfer who looks at Web pages with the intent of finding specific information. Viewer can be used interchangeably with User.

Usability – A measure of the ease by which a user can locate the information he/she is looking for in a Web site.

World Wide Web (www) - A huge collection of documents connected electronically over the Internet by means of a language called HTTP (HyperText Transfer Protocol). Also referred to as the Web.

Web page – A single document within a particular Web site.

Web presentation – A related set of Web pages. Web presentation can be used interchangeably with Web site.

Web site – A related set Web pages or several different sets of Web pages stored on the same server.

Limitations

The information contained in this Thesis is intended for communications professionals who wish to publish effective content on the Web. It provides the necessary techniques to communicate ideas clearly in the context of the medium. The information is presented from the communications perspective only. A discussion of the technology is provided in some instances with the assumption that the communications professional has prior knowledge and experience. The topics of html, the programming
language used to construct actual viewable pages for the Web, the use of any graphics programs (i.e. Adobe Photoshop, Macromedia Dreamweaver, Macromedia Flash, etc.) or any information regarding Web hosting goes well beyond the scope of this Thesis.

The art and psychology of graphic design is also not covered in its entirety. Basic principles will be discussed in order to give the reader an understanding as to why certain graphic elements are used and how to use them effectively. A logical of the steps that produce clear, cogent, and user-friendly Web content, within the constraints of the technology, is presented. The technology itself is too broad a topic, and is not covered. The design of Web sites is a two-fold process comprised of communications and technology. The reader will take with them an adequate understanding of the Web, and the methods of design that bridge major gaps between these two arenas. This bridge is built on these underlying themes – Keep it simple, be consistent, and keep the file size small.

Summary

As communicators, we strive to relay as much information as possible to our audiences. The printed document affords us the opportunity to be creative and promotional because it provides some flexibility in the length of the documents we prepare. The reason for this flexibility is that the audience has a hard copy of the material to read it its leisure, skim through, and refer back to on other occasions. The Web does not afford such luxuries. People turn to Web sites for quick access to information. They usually won’t spend time to read through the carefully crafted copy, or stop and look at the crisp image on a home page. It is actually the technology that works against us.
With this in mind, communicators must be as effective and brief as possible when disseminating information over the Web. We must understand that the same technology that provides limitless access to information, constrains us when we are preparing content. It is the task of the communicator to develop a synergy between concise information and audience stimulation. We must first understand the technology before we can achieve our objectives.

Chapter II begins the elucidation of this process by providing a basic understanding of the Web itself. It breaks down the complexity of the technology for the perspective of the professional communicator. Most importantly, it provides an explanation of how the technology has changed the way audiences look for information. This change dictates the manner in which we will create content for the Web.
II. WELCOME TO THE WORLD WIDE WEB

The World Wide Web has become such an integral part of our daily lives that we as communicators, professionals, and casual users almost take it for granted. We use it everyday, never thinking twice about where it came from, how it works, or why it is so important. Communications professionals looking to exploit its capabilities must understand its functionality before they can create presentations that are clear, effective, and usable to a broad audience. Once achieved, they will find that these presentations will aid in establishing relationships with new clients, and better serve those already in existence. In addition, these presentations will both facilitate and automate initial communication processes, reducing costs and saving time, while reaching an estimated 600 million and rising prospective clients.

The Evolution of the Web

Though relatively young, the World Wide Web has undergone a major transformation. The pioneers of the Web were a group of scientists who wanted to create a method of transferring data in the form of documents to different parts of the globe. It was invented at CERN, an institute for particle physics located in Switzerland, for high energy physics use alone. Credit for this goes to Tim Berners-Lee, an English researcher, who now heads the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), the driving force in the development of Web standardization. Berners-Lee is responsible for defining standards such as Uniform Resource Locator (URL), Hypertext Markup Language (HTML), and Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP), the methods by which information is transferred and accessed via the Web.
The particle physicist Paul Kunz created the first U.S. Web page, on December 1, 1991. Kunz set up the first web server as an aside to his work studying subatomic particles. Its purpose was to provide easy access to a database of scientific abstracts from remote locations. This event catalyzed a huge effort put forth by technologists and corporate experimentalists to mold the Web into what the world now uses. "Kunz arguably set off a chain of events that turned the Web into a staple: first of academic research, and ultimately of every day life" (Festa, 2001). The Web has undergone this remarkable evolution during the 1990's, with its most significant technological advancements taking place between 1991 and 1994. Since then, it has evolved from a means of transferring text-based documents to displaying rich multimedia presentations that can be controlled by the user through its interactive capabilities.

This evolution is also apparent in the way information is presented on Web:

"At its inception, the Web was all about information. Visual design was accidental at best. Web pages were clumsily assembled, and 'sites' were accumulations of hyperlinked documents lacking structure or coherence. Designers then took over and crafted attractive, idiosyncratic and often baffling containers for information. The web became a better looking place, but many users hit up against barriers of large graphics, complex layouts, and nonstandard coding" (Lynch and Horton, 2001, p.xi).

The Web quickly became a publishing medium, and graphic designers began to develop ways to work around these barriers, adapting it to better serve page design, so they can focus on the visual aspects of information delivery. A standard started to appear, where key items on pages such as logos and navigational links found uniform and logical placement, training users to go to those areas instinctually when accessing Web sites.
“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” (Lynch and Horton, 2001, p.xi). Sites are being designed with a reservation and a refinement that lends itself to a user-centered experience. Speed and functionality are taking precedence over large graphics and fancy navigational buttons. These changes require anyone who wants to communicate on the Web to develop knowledge in design, information architecture, and usability.

How The Web Works – A Non-Technological Explanation

The World Wide Web is a structure of documents connected electronically over the Internet. The Internet is a computer network comprised of smaller networks. A network consists of at least two computers connected to share information and resources. An individual document found on the Web is called a Web page. These documents combine text, graphics, sound, animation, and video. Several Web pages linked together in a related fashion make up a Web site, or Web presentation. These sites are stored on computers known as Web servers, which are connected to the Internet.

The information contained in these sites is accessed from the Web by a Web browser. These programs allow one to locate, view, and navigate any item found on the Web. Web browsers read and interpret the language HTML to create a visual format of the code, which one sees on screen as an actual page layout, complete with all the elements that form its design.

Web pages are labeled by an address called a Uniform Resource Locator (URL). It specifies where on the Internet a piece of information is stored. Through the URL, a
Web browser is able to locate a Web page and other documents such as music or video from the Web. Once a browser locates the URL, it accesses its respective Web site. Once the site is accessed, you can view other pages or documents by clicking on hyperlinks. A hyperlink is an address identifying another URL on the same page, different page of the same site, a page of another site on the Web. These items must work cohesively to insure a Web presentation's success.

What the Business Communicator Needs to Know – A Segue to Design

In addition to understanding the basic history and functionality of the Web, the communications professional must have a working knowledge of the medium, and how Web users interact with and interpret the information contained within it. Then, a communicator can employ the design principles to be discussed to create effective Web presentations that relate to their viewers. “Forming an ideal relationship requires imparting overall understandability, usability, and quality to the person viewing the site. The means coupling a skillful, visual screen design with a clear, coherent message” (Conger and Mason, 1998, p.8).

The Web viewing audience is comprised of two types: “Surfers”; the millions of people who simply access pages and look at them – and “Users”; people with a decided interest in the pages, who acquire information and then make use of, or act on, that information” (Conger and Mason, 1998, p.8). As the Web was evolving, so was the audience. “The Web viewing audience was also beginning to refine its tastes. The pioneering Web surfers who were content to skim the surface of Internet documents are now outnumbered. People are turning to the Web for information – information with
depth, breadth, and integrity” (Lynch and Horton, 2001, p.xi). Therefore, to know your audience is to understand that Web viewers want their needs fulfilled almost immediately, or they will leave the site for another.

With this in mind, the goal of any Web site is to make each page self-explanatory to the average user:

“As a result, if Web pages are going to be effective, they have to work most of their magic at a glance. And the best way to do this is to create pages that are self-evident, or at least self-explanatory” (Krug, 2000, p.19). Steve Krug (2000) best defines this concept as “Don’t make me think.” Any visitor to the site should be able to find what they are looking for, while spending little time thinking about what they are doing. “The appearance of things, their well-chosen names, the layout of the page, and the small amounts of carefully crafted text should all work together to create near-instantaneous recognition” (Krug, 2000, p.18).

Designing self-explanatory sites is crucial because of the way people actually use the Web. “Users of Web documents don’t just look at information, they interact with it in novel ways that have no precedents in paper document design” (Lynch and Horton, 2001, p.17). This unique interaction is attributed mainly to the fact that Web sites are non-linear. There is no beginning, nor end. In a well designed site, pages are linked together, giving a user the ability to scan information and hunt around by choosing where they want to go, never having to return to a table of contents, or look at an index. These items appear on every page in the form of navigation. More specifically, Krug (2000) states that users mostly “glance at each new page, scan some of the text, and click on the first
link that catches their interest or vaguely resembles the thing they’re looking for. There are usually large parts of the page that they don’t even look at” (Krug, 2000, p.21).

Much of Web use today is guided by the pressing need to find the information that concerns the task at hand, coupled with the desire to save time. As Krug (2000) explains, users are just looking for the relevant bits of information, and scanning is how they find these bits. Designing Web sites to make this process as easy as possible is the true challenge. If a designer can satisfy the “Don’t make me think” theory, he/she will enable users to:

1. Find what they are looking for, or learn the information they sought after.
2. Have a better understanding of the entire site, meaning a better understanding of the company it represents.
3. Explore the site further, devoting time to click through and read its various pages.
4. Control the site effectively, using its navigational tools to explore the site effortlessly without getting lost or confused.

Visually pleasing the user is another task that must be accomplished to create self-explanatory Web pages. It is difficult to define that which is visually pleasing, being that people have different tastes, experiences and levels of expectation. To aesthetically please the viewer, graphics, text, and navigational ease must be skillfully employed. Aesthetics in this context can be defined as graphical elements that facilitate the use of the site. This notion expands on Krug’s (2000) principle, as mentioned earlier, of how the visual elements of a Web page should work in unison to add to its self-evidence.
Summary

The World Wide Web’s young history has been marked by rapid evolution. Its technological nature gives it a unique set of rules. Communications professionals must keep in mind that in order to create viable web content, they need to consider the Web’s evolution, its basic functionality, and the fact that people who use it quickly scan content to fulfill their needs with little thought on the process.

Chapter III will demonstrate why it is necessary to understand these technological implications and user habits, and how they must be considered when planning and designing actual Web pages. It will explain how to compensate for the variables such as hardware and connection speeds people use to view sites. The chapter will then provide a detailed guide to plan, design, and link pages together with navigational tools to build a highly effective Web presentation.
III. DESIGNING AN EFFECTIVE WEB SITE

Before communicating effectively on the Web, one must acquire knowledge of its limitations. The technology that enables the creation and dissemination of Web sites can also cloud their message. A major complication of Web design is compensating for the many technological variables. People access the Web with different computers, screen sizes, and browsers. Knowing what most of the Web viewing population uses to access the Web will ensure an end result that is as close as possible to the communicator’s intentions. Having this knowledge will also save time and money when constructing, updating, and maintaining the site.

Current statistics indicate that Microsoft Windows 98/ME is the most common operating system used by computers accessing the Web. Internet Explorer is the dominating browser, and most users are displaying an 800x600 screen resolution, with 1024 x 768 growing in popularity. Most monitors are set to display at least 65K colors or 16-bit color.

Bandwidth is another major consideration. The most common connection speed is 56K bps. This means an average of 56000 bits are being transferred per second as the browser is downloading a Web page to the computer. This simply means how fast a page appears on a screen. However, this is assuming a perfect connection. The actual speed of data transfer is about 35K, which is 38% lower than expected. Although these statistics are based on worldwide usage, they dictate the lowest common denominator for the Web audience. Communications professionals must assume these conditions when preparing content to be placed on the Web so they can reach as much of the audience as possible. Figure 1* provides these figures as of January 2003.
Figure 1* - Web user statistics as of January 2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Operating System</th>
<th>January 2003</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Windows 98/ME</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Windows 95</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Windows NT</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Windows 2000</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAC</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Browser</th>
<th>January 2003</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internet Explorer 6.x</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet Explorer 5.x</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet Explorer 4.x</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netscape 4.x</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Netscape compatible</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Screen Resolution</th>
<th>January 2003</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>800 x 600</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1024 x 768</td>
<td>46.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>640 x 480</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other or unknown</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Color Depth</th>
<th>January 2003</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>32 bit (max color power)</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 bit (16 million colors)</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 bit (65000 colors)</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 bit (256 colors)</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other or Unknown</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internet Connection Speeds</th>
<th>January 2003</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 14.4K bps</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28K bps</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33.6K bps</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56K bps</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56K – 1M</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater than 1M bps</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Statistics provided by www.w3schools.com and www.Dreamink.com
Taking these numbers into consideration, a basic Web page design must conform to computers running Windows 98/ME using Internet Explorer to browse the Web with a connection speed of 56K bps. In addition, these basic guidelines must be adhered to:

- Page size: 800 x 600
- Web safe colors: 16-bit (65000 colors)
- Page file size: under 60k including graphics and text

These guidelines will have a major effect on the individual design elements that make up a Web site. Each element has its own set of rules to ensure that the quality of work will be exemplified to those viewing the site, and that communicator’s intention is not lost during the electronic transfer of information. These rules will govern the planning, designing, and layout of all graphical and textual information of any Web site.

Planning

“The first step in designing any Web site is to define your goals. Without a clearly stated mission and objectives the project will drift, bog down, or continue past an appropriate endpoint. Careful planning and a clear purpose are the keys to success in building Web sites” (Lynch and Horton, 2001, p.1). Planning is a three-part process: first is to define the goals of the Web site, second is to define the audience, and third is to gather content. The communicator’s task as a planner is to apply his/her professional knowledge of the field to drive the project by real human and business needs. Without this perspective, the Web site will fail as a corporate communications objective.

The communications professional’s roles are to:
Define the goals – The goal of the Web presentation is to offer information about the company, its products and services, and general contact information in order to establish a relationship with prospective clients. The goals should be written as statements that reflect the company's mission and identify how the site will support the mission. "The statements should include specific strategies around which the Web site will be designed" (Lynch and Horton, 2001, p.2).

Define the audience – The next step is to identify the potential users of the site so content can be created and organized to meet their needs. "The knowledge, backgrounds, interests, and needs of users will vary from tentative novices who need a carefully structured introduction to expert 'power users' who may chafe at anything that seems to patronize them or delay their access to information" (Lynch and Horton, 2001, p.2). A well-designed site should be able cover these extremes. An analysis of the potential audience will also affect the visual feel of the site. It will aid in making decisions about graphics, color, multimedia, and the editorial style of the text. Gaining insight into the user's point of view will guide the delivery of the information.

Gather content – "Once you have an idea of your Web site's mission and general structure, you can begin to assess the content you will need to realize your plans" (Lynch and Horton, 2001, p.2). Gathering content requires evaluating existing resources to determine what is in abundance and what is lacking. This process requires interviewing key members of the organization for which you are designing, reviewing current marketing materials if available, and determining which information can be transported to the Web to realize the site's goals. Web research can also be conducted by visiting the
sites of other companies in the industry to gain other information and see how the competition is presenting itself.

With all these items in check, an organized site plan can be constructed to insure the goals of the site are met in a timely manner within the constraints of budget and technology. Based on Lynch and Horton (2001), the following represents a site plan that can be used for an informational small business Web site:

Goals and strategies

- What is the mission of the organization?
- How will creating a Web site support the mission?
- What are the most important goals of the site?
- Who is the primary audience?
- What does the organization want the viewer to do after viewing the site?
- What Web related strategies will be used to achieve these goals?
- How will the site’s success be measured?
- How will the site be maintained?

Production issues

- How many pages will the site contain?
- What technical requirements are needed?
- What is the budget for the site?
- What is the production schedule?
- What areas of the site should be outsourced?
The answers to these questions define the boundaries of the Web presentation, and lay the groundwork for the actual design process. As Lynch and Horton (2001) state, "If you cannot confidently answer all of these questions, then no amount of design or production effort can guarantee a useful result" (Lynch and Horton, 2001, p.4).

**Information Architecture**

The most crucial element in designing a Web site is the organization of its content. Creating a detailed architecture for the information will result in the user successfully learning about the organization. Information architecture is the process by which information is grouped into logical units based on a hierarchy. The unique manner in which information is grouped on a Web site is based on the way people scan web pages, and the amount of information they digest at a given time. It is much more effective to have several short groups of information rather than long documents. "Cognitive psychologists have known for decades that most people can hold only about four to seven discrete chunks of information in short term memory" (Lynch and Horton, 2001, p.38). Once the information architecture is developed, it controls the other elements of the site and its navigation.

The first step is to divide the content into logical units. This process is known as chunking. Concise chunks of information help create short, uniform pieces of content suited for viewers to scan on a computer screen. Chunks share common attributes such as information about a company’s background.

After the information is chunked, a hierarchy must be developed. Chunks of information should be ranked in terms of importance, moving from general to specific.
The hierarchy will determine the menu and submenus of the site, once again dictating its navigation. Practically all Web sites, no matter what size, depend on a clearly defined hierarchy to be successful.

People are exposed to information architecture daily, whether at their occupations or at the supermarket. Steve Krug (2000) makes an effective analogy by relating a Web sites hierarchy to going to a store. He says that when you walk in, you look for the department you wish to find a particular product. Once there, you look for a specific aisle, and then the shelf, and eventually the product’s location on that shelf. This method of drilling down forms a mental model for how people locate things. Users apply a similar mental model when searching the Web. “They use these models to assess relations among topics and to guess where to find things they haven’t seen before” (Lynch and Horton, 2001, p.39). It is then necessary to create a hierarchy for the information architecture that matches mental models so as not to frustrate them, causing them to leave the site.

The next step to developing the information architecture of the site is to create an outline. The outline will represent the way a user might logically access the site’s contents based on the chunking and hierarchy of the information. Outlines move from general to specific in a logical order, much like the one used in this Thesis, or the layout of a supermarket. Figure 2 represents a typical outline for a small business Web site.
Figure 2 – A typical information architecture outline

Company information
  Introduction
  Background
  News

Products and services
  General description
  Specific product information

Frequently asked questions

Contact information
  Phone number and email
  Location
  Request information

Privacy Information

The main headings of the outline are organized logically from general to specific. If one were to visit a site exhibiting this organization, with no prior experience, he/she would be able to learn about the company starting from who they are, and drill down to how they can be contacted. The main headings provide the basis for which the sub headings are grouped, exhibiting relative chunking of information in a definite hierarchy that conforms to the mental maps of typical Web users. The headings will then be used to chart the hyperlinkage of the site.
The final step is to devise the hyperlinkage diagram. This diagram provides the blueprint for the entire site, showing how each page will be navigated. The home page links to each main section of the site. Each main section links to its respective subsections. The process continues, going from general to specific, until all information is accounted for. An efficient linkage system requires each page to link back to the home page. This is accomplished by placing a navigation bar on each page of the site, which will be discussed further in the next section. Figure 3 provides the linkage diagram based on the information architecture outline shown Figure 2.

Figure 3 – Linkage diagram

The black lines indicate each link in the Web site. Each page can be traced back to the home page. Each main section is linked to each other. Each related subsection is linked...
to its main section. The main sections and home page can be accessed from every page of the site. A clear, consistent and easy to use hyperlinkage system has been created to navigate of the site.

Navigation and Buttons

Navigation is the tool used by viewers of a site to find the information they require. It is the omnipresent table of contents located on every page, the element that defines the non-linear nature of the Web itself. Navigation must be clear, simple and consistent. It is a fact that most Web users rely on navigation to determine where they want to look. Viewers are limited to what’s on their screen at one time, and can’t see ahead or behind. They use the navigational components to:

1. Feel grounded as they search the site
2. Learn what the site contains
3. Figure out how to use the site
4. Determine if the site portrays a professional impression
5. Decide to return to the site and establish contact with the company

Navigation takes precedence to page design, graphics and even copy. For example, a user of the site might wish to find only one piece of information – the company telephone number. The first place he/she will look is the navigation bar for any item to click that would indicate how to contact the company. He/she will click it to find the phone number and write it down, and may never give a second glance to pictures, copy or anything else on the site.
There are several ways navigation can be designed and placed on a page. No matter the choice, two things must remain constant: it is consistent in its appearance and location on every page. Doing so will give users confirmation that they are still are on the same site. The industry coined the term “persistent navigation” to illustrate this concept. A basic persistent navigation should at the very least include the Site Id or logo, clickable buttons that make up the sections of the site, and a way to return the home page. More complicated sites can incorporate areas to display subsections, search engines, or e-commerce links. Persistent navigation is commonly seen as a navigation bar. It is usually placed across the top of each page, or down the left hand side. Figure 4 represents a simple navigation bar.

Figure 4: Simple horizontal and vertical navigation bar

Site ID or Logo

Site ID or Logo
The Site ID or logo is the branding symbol of the company, and should be placed at the top left corner of every page. It represents the primary information of the site. Immediately following are the sections, or primary navigation. These are the hyperlinks to the main content sections of the site. The links are named after the main headings from the information architecture outline (Refer to Figure 2).

Hyperlinks used in the navigation bar take the form of buttons. Buttons are visual cues that let the user know what to click in order to get to a particular section. Buttons should be distinguished from other text on the page, and clearly and obviously labeled. A simple change of color when a user rolls the mouse over the area in the navigation bar they wish to click is an effective determinant. Figure 5 demonstrates a basic button effect.

Figure 5: Button in normal state and with mouse positioned in clickable area.

Site ID or Logo

There are a multitude of design techniques for making buttons ranging from basic highlighting to three dimensional and animated special effects. Graphics programs such as Adobe Photoshop, Macromedia Fireworks or Macromedia Flash provide detailed
tutorials for designing unique buttons and importing them into a Web site. The graphical differentiation of navigation bars and buttons from the page items will be discussed further in the Page Layout section later in this chapter.

**Page Layout**

Effective page layout for the Web is characterized by clarity, simplicity, and overall visual appeal. "The spatial organization of graphics and text on the Web page can engage readers with graphic impact, direct their attention, prioritize the information they see, and make their interactions with your Web site more enjoyable and efficient" (Lynch and Horton, 2001, p.81). To achieve efficacy in a layout, pages must be designed for scanning. "One of the best ways to make a page easy to grasp in a hurry is to make sure that the appearance of things on the page - all of the visual cues - clearly and accurately portray the relationships between the things on the page: which things are related, and which things are part of other things. In other words, each page should have a clear visual hierarchy" (Krug, 2000, p.31).

Graphic design is used to create visual hierarchy. It enables the communications professional to find an optimal balance between visual stimuli and graphic information. Using the tools of page layout, typography, and illustration, the communicator can draw the viewer into each page. By employing shape, color, and contrast, a clear visual hierarchy can be created to make the user's experience informative and pleasurable. "The most effective designs for general Internet audiences use a careful balance of text and links with relatively small graphics. These pages load into browsers quickly, even
when accessed from slow modems, yet still achieve a substantial graphic impact” (Lynch and Horton, 2001, p.83).

Establishing a visual hierarchy communicates the information architecture of the site. Information is related visually according to the way it is chunked. To visually portray these relationships, the most important items on a page are given the most prominence. “For instance, the most important headings are either larger, bolder, in a distinctive color, set off by more white space, or nearer the top of the page- or some combination of the above” (Krug, 2000, p.31). The items that relate to a particular heading are then grouped under it, using a similar visual style, only less prominent. Implementing a visual hierarchy is crucial in designing navigation bars and subnavigation. Figure 6 displays a vertical navigation system implementing a visual hierarchy.

Figure 6 – Visual hierarchy applied to navigation

A
Site ID or Logo

B
Site ID or Logo

Company Information
Figure 6A represents a navigation bar containing the main sections of the Web site. Each hyperlink is of the same level in the hierarchy, and therefore visually identical. Figure 6B shows the navigation bar after “Company Information” is clicked to reveal its sub headings. Here, the main section is big, bold and colored. The sub links are smaller, indicating they are smaller parts of the whole, demonstrating the next level down the hierarchy according to the information architecture.

Visual hierarchy is also used when organizing items on the page itself. As mentioned earlier, the most prominent component of any page is the navigation bar. It is necessary to use contrast and placement to make the navigational tools as obvious as possible to a general user. Placing the navigation at the top of the page or along the left side using color to create contrast from the rest of the page is a common practice. Figure 7 demonstrates using contrast to offset the navigation bar from the rest of the page.
Figure 7 – Vertical and horizontal placement of navigation bar

Site ID or Logo

Content area
Figure 7 (continued)

Site ID or Logo

Content area
In both examples, a visual hierarchy is clearly established. The Site ID or logo is the boldest item on the page, placed in the top left corner, and the navigation bar in the proper proximity. Once the look and placement is decided, it will remain consistent for every page in the site.

Visual hierarchy is also important when displaying page content. It clarifies information relationships for the viewer. Referring back to the information architecture will determine the visual hierarchy of page content. Figure 8 shows both page styles exhibiting a visual hierarchy for content.
Services

Specific service

A description of the specific service is included in this area. A description of the specific service is included in this area. A description of the specific service is included in this area. A description of the specific service is included in this area. A description of the specific service is included in this area. A description of the specific service is included in this area. A description of the specific service is included in this area. A description of the specific service is included in this area. A description of the specific service is included in this area.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site ID or Logo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Services**

**Specific service**

A description of the specific service is included in this area. A description of the specific service is included in this area. A description of the specific service is included in this area. A description of the specific service is included in this area. A description of the specific service is included in this area. A description of the specific service is included in this area. A description of the specific service is included in this area. A description of the specific service is included in this area. A description of the specific service is included in this area. A description.
The items on the page are visually nested to show that they are related. For instance, "Services" would encompass the entire content area of the page. It is then clear that "Specific service" is part of this section. The actual service description is nested under "Specific service" to show its relation. The content is moving from general to specific in the same manner as the information architecture. The techniques for visually creating prominence for content will be discussed in the Typography section.

After these major design considerations have been established, a footer must be placed at the bottom of the page. Footers contain copyright information, as well as other items that should be included on every page but are the least important in the hierarchy, such as links for legal and privacy statements. The footer can be offset by a simple line, or a shade of color that is slightly darker than the page background, but not as dark as any of the more prominent page elements. Also, the size of any type in Footer should be smaller than any word in the content area of the page, because it is at the bottom of the hierarchy. Figure 9 adds a footer to both page styles.
Services

Specific service

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Pictures and illustrations can be placed on pages according with their relevance to the information. For example, a picture of a product or an image that exemplifies a service can be placed on the page in accordance of the established visual hierarchy. To use pictures correctly, it is necessary to make a careful examination of the company the Web site is representing and the audience viewing it. An accurate assessment of when and where to place pictures can then be made. On a Web site, pictures and illustrations take the form of graphics. The rules for importing graphics will be discussed in the Graphics section of this chapter. The most important thing to remember is to determine their relevancy. Figure 10 demonstrates proper placement of an image that exemplifies the “Specific service” in both layouts.
Figure 10 – An image added to illustrate the “Specific Service”

A description of the specific service is included in this area. A description of the specific service is included in this area. A description of the specific service is included in this area. A description of the specific service is included in this area. A description of the specific service is included in this area. A description of the specific service is included in this area. A description of the specific service is included in this area. A description of the specific service is included in this area. A description of the specific service is included in this area. A description of the specific service is included in this area. A description of the specific service is included in this area. A description of the specific service is included in this area. A description of the specific service is included in this area.
A description of the specific service is included in this area. A description of the specific service is included in this area. A description of the specific service is included in this area. A description of the specific service is included in this area. A description of the specific service is included in this area. A description of the specific service is included in this area. A description of the specific service is included in this area. A description of the service is included in this area.

Privacy statement

Copyright 2003. All rights reserved.

The picture is placed underneath the “Specific service” to provide a visual representation and add interest to the page. A consistent and well-structured visual hierarchy has been established for all the elements of the page.
Secondary Links

Secondary links are those that are placed throughout the content of the page that allow navigation to other relative information. A secondary link can be used to break up long blocks of text by bringing the viewer to a new page on which the text continues. They are also used to link a site to other content on the web for additional information. These links are distinguished by color and are underlined. Figure 11 shows a page layout with secondary links.

Page Dimensions

All page content must be kept within the “safe area” of the screen. As previously mentioned, the maximum screen size a design is prepared for is 800 x 600. Within these dimensions, web browsers place scroll bars on the right side and bottom of the screen. To compensate for scroll bars, the layout must be kept to 760 by 560. This is the “safe area” for page content. A well-designed page will conform to these dimensions, preventing the viewer from scrolling. If your content is too long, and scrolling must be used, the page should be prepared to only allow vertical scrolling. Horizontal scrolling is unnecessary and research indicates that it disorients the user. Figure 11 shows a page in the “safe area” of the screen.
Figure 11 – Vertical page layout – 760 x 560 – adding secondary links

In addition to adjusting the size, two secondary links were added to the page. “For reviews” can take the viewer to another Web site that provides industry information, such
as a trade magazine. The continue link was added at the bottom of the page to alleviate scrolling.

These diagrams map out the visual hierarchy and overall style of the page. A layout grid is now established for all the pages of the site. “It (layout grid) gives your site a consistent graphic identity that creates and then reinforces a distinct sense of place and makes your site memorable. A consistent approach to layout and navigation allows readers to adapt quickly to your design and to confidently predict the location of information and navigation controls across the pages of your site” (Lynch and Horton, 2001, p.84).

Design Principles

Information architecture and visual hierarchy will present your information clearly and consistently across the entire site. However, if the page doesn’t look clean, neat and professional, the hierarchy can lose its impact. There are four basic design principles that, when used correctly, will be pleasing to the eye and keep the focus of the information presented on the page. They are alignment, proximity, repetition, and contrast.

Alignment – items on the page line up with each other. “Lack of alignment is the single most prevalent problem on web pages” (Williams and Tollet, 2000, p.106). There are three ways to align objects on a page: left side, center, and right side. Only one alignment style should be used throughout the site. The more information a page contains, the more important a strong alignment is to keep order.
Proximity - related items put close together so they appear to belong. “When items are physically far from each other, they don’t have a relationship. Often on Web pages, many items are orphaned unnecessarily, and many other items have inappropriate relationships” (Williams and Tollet, 2000, p.110). Headings, sub-headings, content and pictures that relate to each other should be kept in close proximity.

Repetition - repeating certain elements to unify a site. “Each page in the Web site should look like it belongs to the same Web site, the same company. Logos, the look of the navigation, the style of the headings, sub-headings, copy, and pictures should be repeated on each page to unify the site.

Contrast - differentiating elements on the page to draw the viewer’s attention. “Contrasting elements guide your eyes around the page, create a hierarchy of information, enable you to skim through the vast array of information and pick out what you need” (Williams and Tollet, 2000, p.118). The stronger an item is on the page the more important it will appear to the viewer.

Figure 12 applies the four design principles to the page to create a pleasing and organized layout. These principles give prominence to the information, while keeping the page clean and functional.
All the elements on the page are in a left alignment. Contrast of color is used to intensify the look of the navigation buttons. Contrast is used to differentiate the level of prominence of the content. Proximity is used to show the relationship of the content. The navigation buttons are in close proximity to each other. Repetition is used on the style of
the buttons, and the style of the secondary links. The combination of these principles visually shows the hierarchy of the page, forming a clean, neat and professional layout.

**Typography**

"Typography is the balance and interplay of letterforms on the page, a verbal and visual equation that helps the reader understand the form and absorb the substance of the page content. Typography plays a dual role of both verbal and visual communication" (Lynch and Horton, 2001, p.115). Typography establishes the visual hierarchy for the verbal content of the page by varying fonts, sizes and styles of headlines, sub headlines, and body text.

Fonts are the actual typefaces of letters. There are two kinds of fonts: Serif and Sans Serif. Serif fonts are used for long blocks of text, such as body copy. Sans Serif fonts are used for larger sized blocks of text such as headlines and buttons. There are three fonts that will read legibly over all browsers: Verdana, Arial (both Sans Serif) and Georgia (Serif). Font size is measured in points. Size can vary when using headlines and sub headlines based on the design, but for body copy, 10 point to 14 point is recommended. Style refers to bold, italics, all capitals, or combinations. It is common practice to use bold on headlines and sub-headlines. Bold should never be used for large blocks of text such as body copy. Italics should be avoided because they do not read well on a screen. Recommended looks for type are:

**Headlines**- Verdana, Arial, Helvetica, sans serif; 16 point; bold face.
Sub-headlines- Verdana, Arial, Helvetica, sans serif; 12-14 point; bold face.

Body Copy – Georgia, Times New Roman, Times, serif: 10-12 point; standard style.

Lines of text should be kept short, never spanning the entire length of the browser. Long lines are difficult to read on a screen. There should also be enough contrast between the text and the background. Black text on a white background is best, but other combinations work well as long as good contrast is achieved. Underline should only be used to signify a hyperlink. If something is underlined, chances are a user will try to click it.

There are many choices with regards to finding a style for typography. The software companies that program browsers are continuously improving their flexibility. As for now, there are just too many variables to consider. It is recommended to work with the fonts listed in this thesis. Manipulating them in various ways can create pleasing effects. However, as a constant rule, once styles are decided on, it is necessary to use them consistently throughout the site.

Color and Graphic Formats

Colors that can be used in a Web site are known as Web safe. This means that they will display correctly in a browser. There are 256 web safe colors that can be used. The number of users who can view 65000 colors is increasing, but colors outside the Web safe 256 are not guaranteed to view properly. All graphics, text and color should fall into the Web safe color range. Most graphics programs have Web safe color palettes. If a
color is used that is outside the safe range, a browser will try to reproduce it as the closest Web safe color. Each color also has a hexadecimal code that is translated into the html of the Web page. Color can be applied to any elements of the page to create a mood, add to the hierarchy, or establish contrast. As with pictures and illustrations, the visual appeal of color is subjective, so experimenting with various combinations is the best way to achieve a desired effect.

As with color, graphics are formatted for display in Web browsers. There are two graphic file formats that all browsers support: GIF and JPEG. An image such as a photo or a hand drawn illustration must be converted to one of these formats to be displayed as web safe. The conversion also compresses the file size of the image to insure that it loads quickly into a browser.

The GIF (Graphic Interchange Format) is best used for images with solid areas of color, such as illustrations, logos and large text. GIFs are also transparent, which means the background of the page will show through certain areas of the graphic. They are also lossless, which means they do not lose any quality when compressed.

The JPEG (Joint Photographic Experts Group) is best used for photographs, images with subtle color changes, depth, and lighting effects. JPEGs are also compressed, but unlike GIFS, they lose quality. The more compression, the more the image quality degrades.

The benefit of compressing files into these formats is that it decreases file size. Most Web graphics are measured in kilobytes. As the file size is decreased, the download time quickens, but at the expense of image quality. Graphics programs enable a designer to toggle between formats and compression rates to determine a good
compromise for their images. A fairly large but acceptable size graphic is less than 20 kilobytes.

**Writing Copy**

Writing for the Web is based on how people read from the Web. Reading text on a screen is unpleasant.Scrolling is frustrating. Web sites are non-linear. Most importantly, Web pages are scanned. Copy that is to be placed on the Web must be concise. The best way to write for the Web is to use the "inverted pyramid" style used by journalism, according to Lynch and Horton (2001). The first paragraph should contain the most important information so viewers can find it quickly.

The next step is to break up information according to the hierarchy established during the planning phase. This is accomplished by implementing headings and subheadings to distinguish between information chunks. Using the design principles, a style can be developed for each element of the copy. Once established, copy can be written using short sentences and paragraphs that are broken up by headings and subheadings. If there are lists of items to be incorporated, using bullets is an effective method to maintain concise writing. Kathy Henning (2000), author of "The Seven Qualities of Highly Successful Web Writing" offers these guidelines:

1. Clarity – focus on the reader, and how they will understand.
2. Relevance – keep to the subject.
3. Brevity- online text should have half as many words as print. Cut every unnecessary word, but never sacrifice clarity for brevity.
4. Scanability and readability – Break up text with headlines, bullets, and paragraphs.

5. Consistency – Navigation, terminology, tone and style should be consistent to the site.

6. Freedom from errors – Mistakes detract from the trustworthiness of the site. Always proofread, or better yet, have someone else proofread.

7. Good integration with site design – Text should be formatted to fit into the scope of the design.

Designing the Homepage

The homepage has a different task than any other page in the site. It has to convey the overall reason for the site’s existence. It is the first page a viewer will see when they access the site. The homepage should employ a unique element to grab the viewer’s attention immediately. This unique element must “tease” as Steve Krug (2000) states. Teasers can be in the form of an interesting graphic, a tagline, a welcome message, or any combination of the three. For more complex sites, the homepage can also include quick links to access the most frequently viewed pages of the site, a search engine, or any special promotions that require attention.

Multimedia

One of the latest trends in design, multimedia can have a profound effect on its audience. This effect is not necessarily positive. There are several issues involved with the use of sound, video, and animation. First, the user must have a broadband Internet
connection. DSL and cable are examples of connections that allow for quick data transfer. The reason for this is that multimedia files are large, possibly reaching megabyte proportion. A megabyte is 1024 kilobytes. Another condition is that the browser downloading the site must have the proper plug-in for the type of multimedia. Plug-ins allow specific multimedia content to be displayed. Macromedia’s Flash player is an example of a commonly used Plug-in.

Assuming the technology is in place, a careful evaluation of the audience and the company that is being represented is needed to determine if multimedia will aid the communication process. The most common form of multimedia on the Web is Macromedia Flash. Flash is a powerful program used to design and combine complex animation, audio and video to create dynamic presentations. Animated introductions, navigational buttons, or any kind of moving content can be added to a Web site using Flash. Entire sites can be constructed in Flash as well.

If animation is to be used, it should be used sparingly to enhance the message of the site, and not distract the user. In addition, the user should always have the option to skip the animated section and go right to the information they are looking for. It is common that designers today are over using the medium because it is considered “cutting edge”. If multimedia is opted for, applying the design principles discussed in this chapter to designing animation sequences can aid in the effectiveness of the site.
Summary

Chapter III has provided a template that can be applied to the creation of any Web site. No matter how simple or complex the site, these guidelines are necessary to its success. They will help the communications professional to reach the largest audience possible. They will enable him/her to create a well organized, visually pleasing, and easy to navigate Web presentation. The following provides a quick reference of the chapter:

1. Create a hierarchy of information.
2. Apply a visual hierarchy to communicate the information.
3. Use the four design principles to enforce the hierarchy.
4. Use a teaser on the home page
5. Write with brevity and clarity.
6. Use typography to add to the visual hierarchy
7. Use the safe area (760 x 560) for page content.
8. Use the Web safe color palette.
9. Save graphics as GIFs or JPEGs
10. Use multimedia when appropriate
11. Be consistent in all areas of the design

This guide has been developed to add to the techniques that have developed over the course of the Web’s history. These rules have been researched by highly acclaimed and reputable sources. Due to the volatility of the medium and rapid changes in technology, further research was conducted to maintain the validity of this content, and to prove the relevancy of past research. In the next chapter, the results of an original survey that was
conducted to gain insight into the Web user's preferences are analyzed. The survey proved to be a valuable tool that enhanced the research reviewed for this Thesis while aiding in the creation of the Web site guide.
IV. SURVEY – GAINING INSIGHT ON EFFECTIVE WEB DESIGN FROM THE USER’S PERSPECTIVE

Description of the Survey

The Survey (see Appendix A) included ten statements that were measured on a Likert based rating scale. The ratings were: SA - strongly agree, A - agree, N - neutral, D - disagree, and SD - strongly disagree. The statements represent recurrent arguments over the way Web professionals approach design. Each was crafted to gather information on what a typical Web user deems important to a Web site's design and functionality. An open-ended section was also included in the survey for additional comments, followed by a general information section to gather demographics.

Sample

A sample of 50 individuals was required to gain valuable survey results. These individuals ranged in age from 25 years to 50+ years, were professionally employed, and had different levels of experience with using the Web as a source of information. These prerequisites were necessary to determine an accurate level of importance for each of the criteria. The idea was to reach people who were familiar with deadlines, people who depended on speed and validity when searching for information. The respondents either owned or were employed by organizations in a wide array of industries. This would insure a variety of experience and reasons for using the Web in a professional setting.
Purpose

The main intent of the survey was to gather quantitative data that supports the principles demonstrated in this Thesis, while expanding on the research already provided. Although the principles demonstrated are supported by the research of highly reputable sources of award winning material, it was necessary to gain primary information on user preferences to diminish the differences and solidify the solutions. In doing so, the validity, relevancy, and timeliness of original content would be further proved.

Results

After gathering 50 completed surveys, the answers to each of the 10 statements were tallied. Percentages were then calculated to reveal the preferences of the individuals who responded. The results were applied to the information already accrued from established to help develop the guidelines presented in Chapter III.

Statement 1: It is a substantial benefit for any company to have a Web site that effectively communicates its presence.

34 respondents or 68 percent strongly agreed (SA), 14 respondents or 28 percent agreed (A), 1 respondent or 2 percent answered neutral (N), 1 respondent or 2 percent disagreed (D), and zero respondents strongly disagreed (SD) to statement 1.

Since 96 percent of the respondents either strongly agreed (SA) or agreed (A) to this statement, it can be concluded that the majority feels it is of great value for a company to have an effective Web site. This belief coincides with trends in current
research on the importance of the Web to business communication explained in the beginning of Chapter I.

It was assumed that a high percentage of respondents would answer either strongly agree (SA), or agree (A) with this statement. Based on the preliminary research, the Web has grown significantly over the past few years. In this age of electronic communication, any company would benefit from having a Web site. As more people rely on the Web, the traditional methods of communicating, such as the telephone and yellow pages, are turned to less frequently.

Statement 2: A Web site is its own medium, and should be designed according to the techniques that have been developed and proved by communications professionals.

13 respondents or 26 percent strongly agreed (SA), 29 respondents or 58 percent agreed (A), 8 respondents or 16 percent answered neutral (N), and zero respondents answered disagree (D) and strongly disagree (SD) to statement 2.

For this statement, 84 percent strongly agreed (SA) or agreed (A). This result indicates that users rely on communications professionals to match sites to their mental models. To further prove Krug's (2000) concept of mental models discussed in Chapter III, the results of this statement show that Web users favor the uniformity and organizational structure that experts in the field say is essential to the success of a Web site.

If one were to examine the Web sites of highly successful companies such as IBM, Citibank, or AT&T, he/she would begin to recognize their many similarities. For
instance, logos would appear in the same place on these pages, as well as navigation
buttons, and links. A common practice has developed for placing these vital elements on
a Web page. This practice has standardized certain aspects of Web design, and is proved
by the survey that users have preconceived expectations when exploring a Web site.

**Statement 3:** A Web page should resemble a printed form of communication such as
a magazine advertisement or informational brochure in its design.

5 respondents or 10 percent strongly agreed (SA), 21 respondents or 42 percent
agreed (A), 16 respondents or 32 percent answered neutral (N), 7 respondents or 14
percent disagreed (D), and 1 respondent or 2 percent strongly disagreed (SD) with
statement 3.

Similar to statement 2, these results also indicate that Web users find comfort in
familiarity when they turn to the Web for information. The majority here was 52 percent
in agreement, which indicates that users tend to prefer a graphical layout similar to what
is seen in conventional advertising. This holds true to prior research in that applying the
basic graphic design elements discussed in Chapter III will prove successful, as long as
the limitations of the medium must be accounted for.

Being exposed to advertising from magazines and other printed materials, we are
accustomed to certain aspects of design, such as bold headlines, and flashy photography
that make items stand out on a page. We hold the same preferences when it comes to the
Web. Although what we see is on a screen, the same basic concepts of print design can
be applied to designing a Web page to elicit emotion and spark interest.
Statement 4: It is effective to take advantage of the Internet's capabilities by using multimedia to add to the Web presentation.

18 respondents or 36 percent strongly agreed (SA), 26 respondents or 52 percent agreed (A), 6 respondents or 12 percent answered neutral, and zero respondents disagreed (D) or strongly disagreed (SD) with statement 4.

As the Internet evolves into a multimedia platform, businesses are trying new ways to be different by using animation, sound and video to add to their Web presentations. There is constant debate by Web professionals over their effectiveness. 88 percent of respondents are in favor of viewing multimedia on the Web. This preference is a strong indication that multimedia is becoming steadily more popular, and should be considered when designing a site. A careful analysis of the audience should be the deciding factor for using multimedia.

Multimedia can be a powerful tool. It can add life to a presentation through movement and sound. It gives a designer the capability to captivate the audience. Well-produced animated introductions, navigation systems and visual effects, coupled with high quality written copy, will draw the user into the presentation. As the results indicate, users are excited by these elements, and enjoy interacting with a Web site that employs animation and sound. If used properly, multimedia will give style to a company's presentation.

Statement 5: Given the number of Internet users today, it is necessary to design a Web site so the most inexperienced user can easily obtain information from the site.
37 respondents or 74 percent strongly agreed (SA), 11 respondents or 22 percent agreed (A), 1 respondent or 2 percent answered neutral (N), zero respondents disagreed (S), and 1 respondent or 2 percent strongly disagreed (SD) with statement 5.

Most of the respondents surveyed, in this case 96 percent, were in the agreement end of the scale for this statement. This reveals that users prefer Web sites that are simple to use. Supporting Steve Krug’s (2000) “Don’t me think theory,” the results indicate that simplicity, easy navigation, and logical organization are essential for designing Web sites. Judging by the responses, it can be assumed that the average user does not consider him/herself a Web expert, and prefers the feeling of confidence evoked by successfully navigating Web sites.

There are endless possibilities to creating a Web site. Whether it is basic or extremely intricate and animated, the site must be simple to use. The most exciting and new technologies can be employed to add dimension to a site, but they must not detract from the information, or confuse the user. The site should be planned with the mind set that a novice Web user could type in the address and begin navigating almost immediately.

Statement 6: **The elements of a web page (e.g., pictures, animations, sounds, video clips) should take no longer than 15 seconds to download, or a user will leave the site.**

28 respondents or 56 percent strongly agreed (SA), 15 respondents or 30 percent agreed (A), 5 respondents or 10 percent answered neutral (N), 2 respondents or 4 percent disagreed (D), and zero respondents strongly disagreed (SD) with statement 6.
A total of 86 percent either strongly agreed (SA) or agreed (A) with this statement, giving insight into the level of patience users have when waiting for information to download into their browsers. Research dictates that the average wait time for a screen to fully load is actually 7 seconds. This figure was derived early in the Web’s history, when pages were less graphic intensive. Given that images and multimedia are now an integral part of a Web presentation, users are more willing to wait 15 seconds before leaving the site.

Loading time can have detrimental effects on a site. Given that user expectations now include detailed graphics and multimedia, it can be assumed that a user will wait slightly longer for a site to load. However, every precaution must be made to ensure that the loading time does not exceed 15 seconds. Adhering to the rules for colors and graphics presented in Chapter will ensure a quick loading time, while minimizing the loss in quality.

Statement 7: Given the number of computer and Internet users, a Web site should be designed for the lowest common denominator, which means assuming that most users have a 13 inch monitor, 233 MHz processor, and a 56K telephone modem to connect to the Internet.

14 respondents or 28 percent strongly agreed (SA), 19 respondents or 38 percent agreed (A), 9 respondents or 18 percent answered neutral (N), 8 respondents or 16 percent disagreed (D), and zero respondents strongly disagreed (SD) with statement 7.

The positive response measured 66 percent for this statement, showing that the majority feels that Web sites should be designed for view on basic computer systems.
This result essentially means that the rules discussed in Chapter III for page size, layout, color, graphics, and typography hold true to insure an ideal viewing situation on all computers, and that no information will be lost due to the technological limitations of the medium. It also guarantees that the site will reach a maximum number of users connected to the Internet.

However, technology changes rapidly. Computers are being built with faster processors, and are coming down in price. Although the statistics and survey results yielded what the most common computer systems are, there is some flexibility. A recommended page size of 800 x 600 is ideal, but more designers are experimenting with 1024 x 768 resolution. If the company the Web site is being designed for has a client base that is of moderate income or young to middle aged, it can be assumed that the audience will own computers that are more current with larger monitors (e.g., 17 inches or larger).

Statement 8: The most important information about a company should be on the first page of its Web site, and all other pages should be accessed from the first page in a logical fashion, by navigational buttons that are located in the same place on every page of the site.

31 respondents or 62 percent strongly agreed (SA), 16 respondents or 32 percent agreed (A), 3 respondents or 6 percent answered neutral (N), and zero respondents answered both disagree (D) and strongly disagree (SD) to statement 8.

With 94 percent either strongly agreeing (SA) or agreeing (A), the results of this statement further demonstrate the importance of an interesting home page and the
presence of a well structured navigation throughout a Web site. Persistent navigation is crucial to the success of any Web presentation. Based on the response to statement 8, users seem to develop an overall sense of a site and its contents from the home page, and rely on navigational elements to remain constant as they read through a site.

The response to this statement is indicative of the mental models users have for Web sites. They expect the home page to be the most fascinating. This page is the opportunity for the communications professional to put his savvy to work in creating the ultimate enticer for the audience. The user will spend the most time examining the home page in order to gain control of the site, learn how to navigate, and gain control.

**Statement 9: A Web page should contain impressive graphics and concise copy, with enough white space to maintain a clear layout that is easily viewed on a computer screen.**

16 respondents or 32 percent strongly agreed (SA), 26 respondents or 52 percent agreed (A), 7 respondents or 14 percent remained neutral (N), 1 respondent or 2 percent disagreed (D), and zero respondents strongly disagreed (SD) with statement 9.

Given that 84 percent of the respondents were in accord with this statement, it is concluded that users prefer to be visually pleased by a Web site's design and implementation of its content. Crisp images coupled with concise copy and placed neatly on the page keeps users interested and aides in satisfying their informational needs.

Given that users want to see good color and images, it is necessary to keep up with design trends. This is where Adobe Photoshop skills are most useful in creating visual effects to add to the Web presentation. A quality image will demonstrate that a
company has put thought into their Web site, while maintaining the human feel. A warm photo can cut through the technology and make a connection with the audience.

**Statement 10: The Internet provides a designer with limitless possibilities to create rich multimedia presentations.** Using the most advanced graphic elements (i.e. Flash animation and heavy user interactivity) can portray a company’s image as “cutting edge”.

18 respondents or 36 percent strongly agreed (SA), 24 respondents or 48 percent agreed (A), 6 respondents or 12 percent answered neutral (N), 2 respondents or 4 percent disagreed (D), and zero respondents strongly disagreed (SD) with statement 10.

To answer the question of whether or not multimedia is effective, the majority chose favorably by 84 percent. As animation becomes increasingly popular, average users see it as an indication of a company’s technological prowess and responsiveness to current trends.

Just a few years ago, having a Web site was impressive. Now, communicators are looking for innovative ways to exploit the Internet’s capabilities to provide a “cutting edge” image to its audience. Multimedia should be used more as broadband Internet access grows in use. People want faster connection speeds, and this gives the communicator the chance to push the envelope by employing animation and sound to boost the presentation. Macromedia Flash is one program that helps create multimedia presentations for the Web by condensing file size to ensure a quick load time. As the results prove, users are impressed by multimedia, and building sites entirely in Flash is an option that could prove highly effective.
Summary

The results of the survey added validity to the scope of this Thesis, while providing insight that helped create the techniques discussed in Chapter III. Each statement was met with relatively strong agreement, which aided in determining user preferences on viewing Web sites. Specifically, statements 4, 6, and 10 yielded results that solved issues concerning multimedia. The research reviewed was inconsistent on the appropriateness of this element, especially when it comes to using animation. The survey provided evidence that users enjoy multimedia, as long as it loads quickly and is relevant to the company's presentation. Overall, the survey proved to be successful in yielding user's opinions on the most crucial design issues a communicator faces when preparing content for the Web.

Applying the results to the creation of the guide in Chapter III ensured that the information contained within is current and relevant. In doing so, the guide can be applied to the construction of a live Web site with the confidence that it will achieve the goals of an effective Web presentation. To demonstrate its pragmatism, the guide is put to use in Chapter V to plan and design a Web site for a small business.
V. www.PolishCare.com - A PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF RESEARCH TO THE CREATION OF A WEB SITE FOR THE POLISH AMERICAN CARE AGENCY

The principles and techniques discussed in the previous chapters can best be demonstrated by a live Web site. The culmination of insight gained from past research and the results of the survey has been applied to the creation of an original Web site for the Polish American Care Agency, a small business that provides home caregivers to individuals and families in the New Jersey Tri-state area. The Web site can be viewed online at www.PolishCare.com.

Background

The Polish American Care Agency has been operating with no formal advertising for approximately 10 years. It is a family owned business consisting of 4 employees who operate from an office located in Linden, New Jersey. The business networks with and places caregivers and housekeepers for people who require their services. Due to the recent acquiring of special licenses, the organization is now permitted to vend to individuals who are returning to their residences from nursing homes, hospitals, and senior citizen centers, but still need aid in completing their daily responsibilities. This opportunity has expanded the agency's presence tremendously. Without effective and professional marketing materials, the agency was losing a great deal of business and money.

The organization required the creation of an identity to communicate its presence and set it apart from its competitors. This meant designing an original logo, creating a
color scheme, crafting images, and writing copy. Once established, the task was then to incorporate these elements into a visually pleasing and easily navigated Web presentation.

Planning

Definition of Goals - The main purpose of the Web site is to offer information about the Polish American Care Agency, its services, and how to contact the organization to arrange a consultation.

Definition of Audience - The potential users of the site are people 40 years of age and older who can be characterized as novice to intermediate Web users. With this in mind, the site will require extreme simplicity in its design. These individuals are interested in learning the level of integrity of the company, and require a feeling of comfort. The site should be designed to fulfill these needs.

Content Gathering - There are no previous marketing materials to be assessed. Content will be completely original based on an interview with the owner of the company and web research to determine what information should be included in the site.

Site plan

Goals and strategies

-The mission is to offer an alternative solution for those who require delicate attention at the home while rendering services of the highest quality.

-The Web site will support the mission by providing a professional, cogent, and visually pleasing method of communicating to a large audience.
- The Web site's goals are to establish a presence, communicate a professional image, inform the audience of the company's services, and help establish relationships with new clients.

- The primary audience are people 40 years or older who require caregiver services for either themselves or their relatives.

- The viewer is expected to contact the organization to arrange a consultation and employ its services.

- Email will be the primary web related strategy used to achieve these goals.

- The site's success will be measured on the number of contacts made through the Web site's automatic email form, and if these contacts become clients.

- The site will be maintained by the owner's communication with the designer, who will remain responsible for updating the site and insuring it functions properly.

Production issues

- The site will contain 5 pages.

- Technical requirements include hosting and an email submission with auto response

- The budget for the site is $800

- The site is to be live by July 4th, 2003.

- The HTML programming and Web hosting will be outsourced.
Information Architecture

About Our Company
  Introduction
  Background

Services We Provide
  General description
  Specific services

Frequently Asked Questions
  10 questions and answers

Contact Us
  Address
  Phone number
  Email form

Privacy Statement

Linkage diagram

Diagram image showing the structure of the information architecture with Home Page as the root node and branches for About Our Company, Services We Provide, Frequently Asked Questions, Contact Us, and Privacy Statement.
Navigation and Buttons

Based on the information architecture, it was decided to create a horizontal navigation bar to be placed at the top of the page. Due to the site’s simplicity, there is no need for sub navigation. The navigation bar will remain constant on each page of site.

Horizontal navigation bar

Mouse positioned in clickable area

Page Layout

After deciding on a horizontal navigation bar, the page layout can be designed. The layout will be created to display the visual hierarchy of information, and give the site clarity and consistency. Based on an analysis of the audience, the page layout will be very simple, containing only the necessary elements to provide a clear understanding of the company’s information.
Secondary Links

There will be a secondary link placed on the contact page linking to the privacy statement. The reason is that if someone has hesitation about submitting personal information, he/she can easily find the privacy information to reassure him or her that the company respects confidentiality.

Page Dimensions

All pages will be 760 x 560 to insure that the content will be viewed entirely on an 800 x 600 resolution monitor with no scrolling necessary.
Typography

Headlines – Century Gothic (default Verdana); 18 point

Sub-headlines – Century Gothic (default Verdana); 14 point; bold face

Body Copy – Times; 12 point

Colors and Graphic Formats

Background - #F3EFE9

Navigation bar - #DCB3BB; Highlight #A20032

Logo – #A20032

Text - #000000

Graphics – JPEG format

Images were taken with a digital camera and modified in Adobe Photoshop for aesthetic effect and view on the Web.

Multimedia

Multimedia will not be used based on audience characteristics.
Mock Web Pages To Be Placed Into The Web Site

Home Page

An Alternative Solution For Care And Companionship.

The home page contains a main graphic, which will be repeated on all pages to add to the central theme of the site. Underneath the graphic, modifiers were added to further demonstrate the overall meaning of caring to the user. The unique aspect of this page is the tag line, “An alternative solution for care and companionship”. It is meant to create curiosity and invite the user of the site to read further.
About Our Company

The Polish American Care Agency is an alternative solution for individuals and families needing care. We provide quality services for those who require delicate attention at the home.

Licensed and Bonded by the State of New Jersey, the agency follows the strictest procedures to ensure that a perfect harmony of care and confidence will yield the ideal companionship for each individual's needs.

How We Are Committed To Your Comfort

Extensive reference checks are performed for every caregiver affiliated with the agency.

Services cover the New Jersey Tri-State Area.

Available 7 days a week to provide you with any information or answer any questions you may have.
Caring for someone is a unique task. For this reason, we offer elderly care, child care, and housekeeping for both live-in and live-out situations.

Caregivers Can:

Provide companionship for those in need

Prepare meals

Run daily errands and tasks

Perform housekeeping duties

Help with all general requirements
Frequently Asked Questions

We understand the different reasons for which people require companions. Here are answers to some initial questions you may have:

Does the agency accept insurance as a method of payment?
We offer private care that is paid for by our clients personally.

Will the agency provide a contract of employment?
We provide a written contract upon the start of a caregiver’s services.

What is the average age of a caregiver?
Caregivers usually are between the ages of 35 and 55.

What if the initial caregiver placed does not match?
We will provide you with a caregiver who meets your needs immediately, and with no extra cost.

Do caregivers take personal days?
Typically, caregivers may take up to 2 personal days per month. The days may differ according to a family’s schedule.
Contact Us

The agency offers both office and in-home consultations to provide you with individual attention. To schedule a consultation, call 908-587-1900. To contact by email, please use the form below. A representative will respond to you within 24 hours.

Name: 

Email: 

Phone: 

Comments: 

Your information will not be sold or used for anything other than the stated purpose. Please read our Privacy Statement.
Your privacy is important to us.

Any information submitted to the Polish American Care Agency will be held in the strictest confidence. By no means will any information be used or sold for anything other than its stated purpose.

Thank you for choosing the Polish American Care Agency.
Summary

Each page of the site employs the principles discussed in chapter III. The layout is simple and interesting. First, a clear and well-organized information architecture was created and implemented through a persistent navigational system. Visually, the graphic design elements were used effectively to create a hierarchy of information and an overall aesthetic appeal. There is a strong left alignment used for the copy. Related information is grouped together on each page. Using black text on a light background and bolding headlines and subheads develops contrast. Images are soft and create a feeling of warmth and comfort. They are repeated throughout the site to intensify this effect. Copy was written clearly and effectively, using a warm voice to further demonstrate a human touch and relay the high level of commitment the company offers to its clients. Overall, an effective and easily navigated Web site design has been achieved.

Once the client agrees upon the design of the site, it is ready to be placed on the Web. This process requires a great deal of technical and programming knowledge. To explain this process in its entirety would extend far beyond the scope of this Thesis. Chapter VI will briefly explain this process before it delves into the final steps of the communicator's task: marketing and maintenance.
VI. CONCLUSION

After the site is coded and tested, it is ready to be placed on the Web. The simplest way to do this is by registering with a hosting company. These companies will register the name of the site and store its files on a server that is connected to the web 24 hours a day. They will provide explicit instructions for completing this process. Once the site is stored on a server, it can be viewed by anyone in the world who has Internet access. This type of distribution comes with implications that must be addressed. Unlike traditional forms of advertising such as brochures, a Web sites’ presence must be made known.

Marketing the Web Site

There are several ways to market a Web site. The first is by registering with a search engine. The most useful search engines are Yahoo and Google, and there are many others as well. The site can be registered with each search engine manually, or a submission service can be used to register the site with many search engines at once. Register.com is one organization that provides submission services. Some hosting companies may also provide this service as part of their package.

In addition to registering the site, it must be integrated with the company’s other marketing materials. This process is known as cross marketing. Using traditional media to advertise the site greatly increases the chances of making the site known to the target audience. Cross marketing is accomplished by printing the Web site’s address on business cards, letterheads, and in brochures. The site’s address should also be included in print ads, radio, and television commercials.
Using some public relations techniques can also be very successful. This involves sending press releases to trade magazines. Sending a direct mail piece such as a postcard to introduce the site to clients is also effective. Another method is advertising your site on another Web site. Although web advertising is viewed with ambivalence, it is relatively inexpensive, and can add to the company’s revenue, even if it draws in one customer.

**Maintaining a Current Web Site**

Marketing and maintaining the site are tasks that form a symbiotic relationship. As discussed, one of the major tactics of Web site marketing is registering with search engines. Any time the site is changed, it must be resubmitted. “The most successful sites, though, resubmit regularly anyway, especially when there is new content (Williams and Tollet, 2000, p.289). Web presentations need constant monitoring, maintenance, and improvement. “A site that is not updated in terms of look and technology, and not improved and updated in terms if content and navigational techniques, becomes dated and will experience reduced numbers of users” (Conger and Mason, 1998, p.165). The more current the site is, the more marketable it will be for the company.

Maintaining a Web site goes well beyond fixing errors. The most important aspect is content. Upgrading and adding new information that reflects the company’s evolution will maintain the site’s viability and the company’s professional image. Any change in the organization should be evaluated to determine if it should be included in the Web presentation. The Web site should be reviewed once a month to determine if the content continues to meet the user’s needs. Additional content can also be gathered from
those who use the site. Conducting user tests, focus groups, or surveys can provide access to valuable information. After all, the goal of the site is to meet the user’s needs, and there is no better way than to gather first hand information.

Another area that requires continual evaluation is the design itself. It is necessary to ensure that the design is current. Monitoring the Web for design trends and paying close attention to the competition’s Web presentations will aid in maintaining a current design. In an electronic age, a heavy emphasis is placed on technology to demonstrate a company’s prowess in its field. Improving the design is necessary to maintaining the company’s professional image on the Web. Upgrading the design might mean taking advantage of new technologies such as multimedia and animation. Although these elements might have been decided against earlier, the rise in broadband access and the number sites employing this technology are good cues for reconsideration.

Any change in the Web site requires an evaluation of the hyperlinks. It is necessary to make sure that each link still works. Adding pages or links should flow into the navigation consistently, and function in the exact same manner as the original links. New links should also be checked to make sure that they do not interfere with the efficiency of the navigation, and that they are placed within the information architecture logically. This might require some redesign work, which can be considered when during the evaluation process.

Overall, site maintenance is best achieved through research. Monitoring the site for errors, evaluating the content for change, and analyzing design trends are crucial to keeping the site current. Web research should be conducted to monitor trends in technology, multimedia usage, and to watch the competition. This means that the
communicator's task is not complete once the site goes live. He/she must constantly look for areas to improve upon.

Summary

The techniques exhibited in this Thesis will aid the communications professional in developing viable content for the Web. The medium offers limitless possibilities for creation. The biggest problem one will face when designing is how to exercise restraint. It is necessary to maintain a clear and uniform theme when developing the informational structure and visual feel of a site. As any communicator knows, no client and no audience are alike. This guide was created with this in mind, and can be used to build sites for a one-person company, or a complex organization. As a communicator's experience grows, he/she will wish to experiment with new ideas, push the limits, or simply be more creative. Whatever the choices, these basic principles must be implemented into the thought process.

The communications professional should use this guide to acquire a basic knowledge of how the Web functions, and what the limits of the technology are. With this in mind, he/she can then implement the procedures outlined in Chapter 3 to create strong, cohesive, and visually pleasing Web presentations. The techniques presented have been proved by the past research of reputable sources and the results of the survey administered. As the Web flourishes, it becomes more of a multimedia haven. However, its roots will remain in the transfer of information. As communicators, we must be able to use the medium effectively, explore the possibilities it has to offer, while keeping in
mind that the message must reach the audience clearly and quickly. To find a perfect blend of visual stimulation and cogent information is the difficult task we face.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


APPENDIX

SURVEY

This survey is being conducted for a Thesis project in order to receive a Master of Arts in Corporate and Public Communications. Its purpose is to gain insight on the methods of designing and implementing an effective web presentation for a small business, from the communications perspective.

FACT:

1. There are an estimated 3.6 million websites on the Internet.
2. The number of Internet users is approximately 600 million.
3. 58% of Internet users go online daily.
4. 93% of homes with computers access the Internet.

As a graduate student and practitioner in the field of communication and graphic design, I would appreciate your help in identifying the critical elements and delivery techniques for websites. All survey responses will be kept confidential. The results of this survey will be an integral part of a research presentation to be given at Seton Hall University, in the Walsh Library, on a date to be determined. If you are unable to attend the presentation, please contact the author, and a copy of the research Thesis will be sent to you.

Please return the completed survey to:
WELCOME

Please rate these 10 elements using the following scale:

SA – Strongly Agree
    A – Agree
    N – Neutral
    D – Disagree
SD – Strongly Disagree

1. It is a substantial benefit for any company to have a website that effectively communicates its presence.

    SA  A  N  D  SD

2. A website is its own medium, and should be designed according to the techniques that have been developed and proved by communications professionals.

    SA  A  N  D  SD

3. A web page should resemble a printed form of communication such as a magazine advertisement or informational brochure in its design.

    SA  A  N  D  SD

4. It is effective to take advantage of the Internet’s capabilities by using multimedia to add to the web presentation.

    SA  A  N  D  SD

5. Given the number of Internet users today, it is necessary to design a website so the most inexperienced user can easily obtain information from the site.

    SA  A  N  D  SD

6. The elements of a web page (e.g., pictures, animations, sounds, video clips) should take no longer than 15 seconds to download, or a surfer will leave the site.

    SA  A  N  D  SD
7. Given the number of computer and Internet users, a website should be designed for the lowest common denominator, which means assuming that most users have a 13" monitor, 233 MHz processor, and a 56k telephone modem to connect to the Internet.

8. The most important information about a company should be on the first page of its website, and all other pages should be accessed from the first page in a logical fashion, by navigational buttons that are located in the same place on every page of the site.

9. A web page should contain impressive graphics and concise copy, with enough white space to maintain a clear layout that is easily viewed on a computer screen.

10. The Internet provides a designer with limitless possibilities to create rich multimedia presentations. Using the most advanced graphic elements (i.e. Flash animation and heavy user interactivity) can portray a company's image as "cutting edge".

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
GENERAL INFORMATION

NAME__________________________________________

TITLE__________________________________________

OCCUPATION____________________________________

COMPANY________________________________________

Please answer any, all, or none of the below:

Gender:
Male ______
Female ______

What is your age?
25 – 35 years ______
36 – 45 years ______
46 – 55 years ______
56+ years ______

How often do you go online?
Several times a day ______
Once a day ______
Several times a week ______
Once a week ______
Less than once a week ______

THANK YOU