

Effective Design for the Web

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Who's Usually Involved?

- Business Owners / Representatives (the customer aka "stakeholder")
- Product Manager (sales)
- UI Design / Visual Design (designers)
- Production (programmers)

Sometimes these roles are combined

- Depend on the size of the project
- Communication between these roles is integral

How it often breaks down

(small projects)

Sales (\$\$\$)

Design
(What)

Production
(How)

Or even...



Sales /
Design
(What)



Production
(How)

How should the process break down?

Concept - Sales defines the broad scope of the project with the customer (who are you, what do you do? Goals.)

Discovery - Research - Each department provides input on level of effort required.

Definition - Concepts, ideas, effort and limitations are documented.

Refinement - Definition is reviewed with the customer, changes made as required.

Development - Prototype, test, and build the final product.

Presentation Paradigm

What's a Paradigm?

"A set of assumptions, concepts, values, and practices that constitutes a way of viewing reality for the community that shares them"

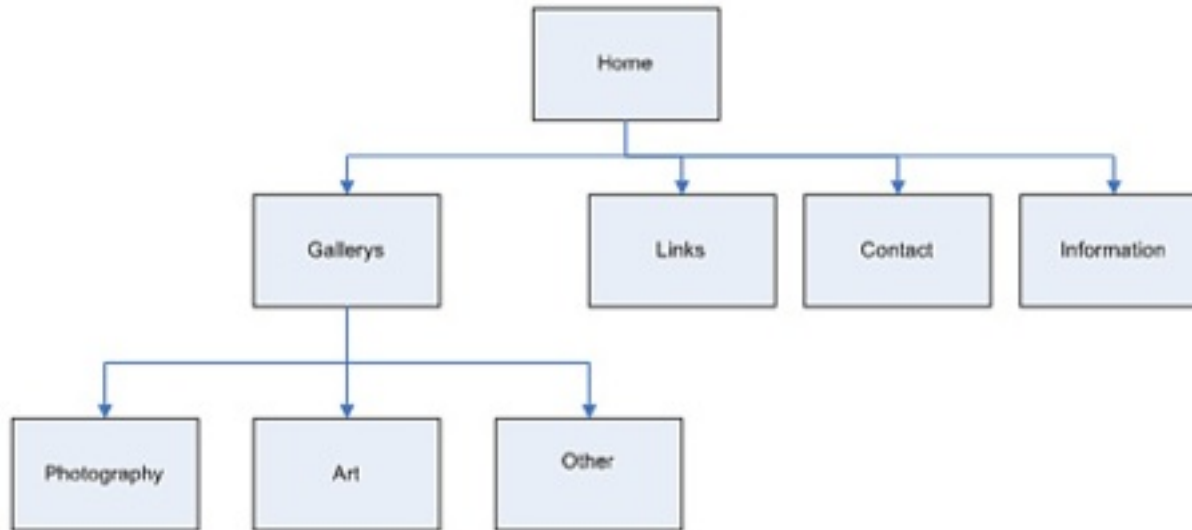
<http://www.seradigm.co.nz/research/definitions>

Presentation Paradigm

- **You need to be a consumer**
 - Use the medium regularly
 - Know the baseline for your audience
 - Be aware of trends, current and future
 - Research Research Research
- **Content Structure and Depth**
 - Create a Sitemap
 - Organize the site's information into logical "containers"
 - Keep it as simple and straightforward as possible
 - Keep it shallow and logical
 - Wireframes?

Presentation Paradigm (cont)

An example of a simple sitemap



Determining the site's structure and creating a sitemap before you design, saves you trouble later.

Presentation Paradigm (navigation)

- Keep the navigation as simple as possible to still be effective
- If your navigation is large and confusing, or many layers deep, evaluate whether you're organizing the site in the most effective way.
- Be certain that your navigation methods are clearly and quickly understood by your audience. No Mystery Meat. Test test test.
- Separate navigation by core functions. Example patterns are:
 - Feature Navigation
 - Main Navigation
 - Footer Navigation
 - Category Navigation

Knowing your Audience

- Research Research Research
 - Market research easily available and affordable
 - Understand what your customer does, and what value they offer, and their competitive advantage.
 - With your client's help, assemble a representative set of their customers. Send a brief survey. Ask questions.
- Do they have a website? Get stats.
- Know the most important info to the typical visitor
 - Store Hours?
 - Location?
 - Phone Number?
 - Value Proposition?
- Make these easily accessible and available often

Knowing your Audience

Technical Limitations

- Use statistics, sampling, or other discovery to determine the technical limitations of your audience
 - Screen Width
 - Color Depth
 - Flash Ubiquity
 - Technical Ability
 - Connection Speed

Knowing your Audience

Style

A site's style should lend itself to its audience. For example:

- **Flash, Motion, High Interactivity** - Agencies, Creatives, Performing Arts, Artists
- **Social Sites** - Sites or products around which exist a passionate user base
- **Simple, Airy Feel** - Web 2.0 Apps, Social Media for 25+, Environmental Companies

What's the goal?

Understand what your customer wants from their website

- Simple Presence
- Lead Generation
- Sales Generation
- Virality

What are the calls to action?

- Show up at retail location
- Contact Customer (phone, email, form, survey)
- Buy a product
- Request a print catalog
- Forward to a friend

What's the goal? Tracking

Once we know the goals, we need to track them so that we know they're being met

- Analytics
- Lead Sources (tie to a promo / deal)
- Conversions

These help assure the site is valuable to the customer

Communications

- Good client communication is priority one
- Involve them at every step
- Communicate the scope of work to be performed
- Sign-offs help ensure client expectations and your expectations are in sync
- Helps control "scope creep" aka. One More Thing
- Pad schedules for unforeseen circumstances
- Actively manage your client's expectations
- Be accessible!

Design, Hand off, and Production

Design

- Almost Always Photoshop
- Ask your programmer what they want
- As your designing, ask your programmer for a gut-check
- Work back-and-forth with your client to refine the design
- Once the client has accepted the design, have them "sign off" on it. The design is now in "design lock." Be sure the client understands that changes past this point cost additional time and money.

Design, Hand off, and Production

Hand off

- Clean up your layers
- Label
- Use the "comment" function
- Include Rollover States
- Remember to include any non-standard fonts

Design, Hand off, and Production

Production

- Ask the programmer to see progress as they build the site. You can stop potential costly issues if you catch them early.
- Make sure that the programmer is testing on all platforms
- Make sure they're creating code that validates
- Make sure they follow web standard best-practices