

What does
your information
say about your
organization?



BUSINESS DESIGN INTELLIGENCE

THE DESIGN FACTOR

Take command of your knowledge assets.

Proven design principles and techniques can bring order to your information, improve your business communication and impact your bottom line.

Are you making decisions that

Influence

the way your organization is perceived through the information it distributes on the web, in print or in broadcast?.

Ever since Amazon.com and Google emerged rapid advances toward access to information have stimulated our expectation for information that is accountable, convenient, appealing, and readily accessible.

Whether you are a large organization, or an individual promoting a product or service, using the internet effectively saves time and gives any organization, large or small, the opportunity to reduce the number and length of interactions with their audience.



THE DESIGN FACTOR

Communication is an important and necessary part of the business equation. As multiplying channels and format challenge efficiency, information design has emerged as a critical component for today's successful organization.

Design shapes perception

“A well-designed pen, car, computer or software has immense emotional appeal. It enriches your life in a wider way than the single function that caused you to buy it in the first place. It may help provide sensual pleasure, enhance your identity, make your life cognitively less complex because it is obvious how the product works. These intangible values are really fundamental.”

Dr. James Moore,
corporate strategist, CEO of
GeoPartners Research and author of the
critically acclaimed *The Death of
Competition*.

Like most businesses, your organization is now using the internet along with other media and channels to communicate and distribute information to your clients and customers. You're possibly dealing with multiple document formats and quality assurance issues across platforms. The internet is now vital for organizations offering multimedia capabilities, transaction opportunities, data collection and management.

To take advantage of this channel and increase the effectiveness of your communication, ease of use, appearance and functionality are all key to adding value to your business and that's what the design process brings to business.

Whether you need to improve the online experience for your audience, or create uniformity by introducing standards, applying design principles as part of your process, increases your brand equity, reduces cost and adds to a healthy bottom line.

Why has communication design become crucial for business?

The volume of information now available to the public has exploded.

There are now many ways for people to interact with information

due to technological advancements such as the internet, mobile devices and increased screen resolution

Many of the world's most profitable companies consider design their most effective business tool. Over 35 years ago, IBM chief Thomas Watson Jr. - son of the company's founder - said, “*In the IBM company, we do not think that good design can*

“DESIGN IS THE PROCESS OF FINDING ORDER AND OPPORTUNITY IN THE CHAOS THE INTERNET IS CREATING. DESIGN RENDERS TECHNOLOGY USEABLE TO BUSINESS.”

Designing Business. 1996,
Clement Mok.

make a product good. But we are convinced that good design can materially help make a good product reach its full potential.”

Communication design for business extends across all media from the annual report and print materials to online and broadcast media. Design is a problem-solving discipline that is now recognized as a critical component of business success. In the US, The Corporate Design

Foundation and the American Institute of Graphic Arts (AIGA) are working to introduce communication design as a component of effective business strategy in MBA student and executive education.

On the internet it's easy for a customer to go somewhere else if they don't immediately find what they are looking for. This drives the need to design and build information channels that your audience will find pleasurable and leads to the intended business result.

Lee D. Green, Director, Corporate Identity & Design and a 20-year veteran of IBM, said in a recent interview. *“Design has acted as both differentiator and means of corporate integration – Our distinctive look allows us to stand out from competitors. At the same time, our unified approach has become a huge advantage over companies who don't have such a single-minded vision.”*

Designing Information

in the context of the web deals primarily the organization, presentation and distribution of content so it's easy to find and understand.

A usable website is like a competent sales staff that keeps customers happy. Whether your objective is to distribute information to obtain new customers, to sell new products or services, or to sell existing customers more products, a well-designed adds to the effectiveness of your business processes.

The process starts by collecting and identifying the type and volume of information, and the information's intended use. A log or spreadsheet of the content will help you find patterns of how things are related.

By making the data understandable, deciding where information will reside, where and when the content will be accessible, you can start to form the frame work for the site or navigation structure.

The design of the interface must address the content's organization, placement on the page and the person's actions, from a visual and auditory perspective. It's time to put yourself in the shoes of the audience and structure your information so it makes sense to them.

An effective web presence

requires the coordination of many disciplines, multiple media and evolving technologies. By first defining what you're building, planning and visualizing before you develop and launch the final product, you can avoid inefficient and expensive renovations. The process is iterative which means that the final

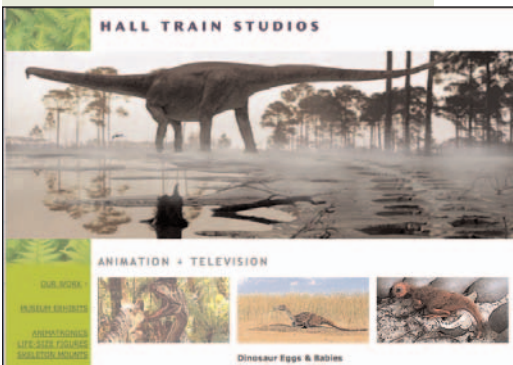
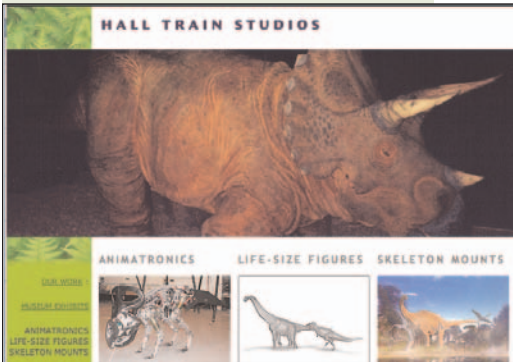
TAKE THE SITE INTERACTION QUIZ

- How do you know what to do at the site. What are the clues?
- Are the elements you interact with and what you see on the screen consistent?
- When you perform an action does it corroborate the content that you accessed?
- Can you find what you're looking for through text links or elements on the interface?



Integrated Approach.

A branding mixup made it critical for parentingnetwork to strengthen it's identity by applying a unified and professional look to its' materials and launch an online presence improving information distribution, facilitating course registration, purchasing of a newly-release Audio CD and creating a growing online database.



Showcase for Intrigue
Stackloads of videotapes, photographs, prehistoric animal parts and images were reviewed and edited to create an identity and website to reach museums across the globe. A few intriguing images and a flash trailer showcases a diverse catalog of work and a planned extranet will allow select clients to preview the multimedia catalog of products and services.

product takes shape in stages. This is a place where your information lives and your audience interacts, so it's important to ask:

4 Main Questions when developing a site.

1. What are we producing and who is it for ?

- **Concept and Planning.**

Get an in-depth understanding of your organization's mission, key business issues and its readiness for meeting its goals. During this phase, you'll need to explore and decide on core business needs, from market analysis and brand development to staffing, partnerships, and capitalization. These activities have long-range and long-lasting implications and must involve the participation at the highest levels of management.

Once the most important questions to define the goals of your organization, the key messages, and target audience are agreed upon, they will be addressed at every stage throughout the project.

In order to communicate with the team working on the site, you'll need to create a document all the requirements for the project and metrics for how the success of the project will be measured once it's completed. At the very least, your document must describe the purpose of the business, what the project will accomplish, what your intended audience(s) will be able to do at the site, as well as the messages intended for them. Every decision will be derived and affected by these answers.

If you are working with a fairly

large group and need budget approval, it may be valuable to create a mock presentation of what you intend to produce. This will help visualize the purpose and intent of the project, act as an internal selling tool to gain project support and allow the development team to define the proposed technology.

2. How will it work & what will it look like?

- **Design Prototyping.**

Now that you've defined what the project should accomplish, the team now needs to address how it will accomplish these things.

In many ways, it is only the beginning as the site will need to now be maintained as long as it is live. Like your home, garden or workspace, integrating new technologies may

Easy to Use

- ▶ Interface
- ▶ Information
- ▶ Interaction.

This is what site design is all about.

Think about your audience asking,

- ▶ **WHERE AM I?**
- ▶ **HOW DID I GET HERE?**
- ▶ **WHERE CAN I GO?**
- ▶ **CAN I TRUST THIS ?**

require a redesigning areas to improve functionality. For example, if you plan to go mobile, there will be different design considerations. Some websites don't need a lot of updating,

but those which have constant and continuous updating of data, such as an online news site or store will need not only a sophisticated content management system, but the support people necessary to keep it running.

What may start with simple grid-type diagrams on paper, will become more elaborate as the interface and the software team begin prototyping actual engineering solutions. Prototypes are examples and not the final solution. They are intended as simulations when it comes to the interface, but the engineering team will need time to develop and plan the feasibility of these solutions before production can start.

3. How will the site behave? The Development Phase.

Any prototype created, along with documented design specifications, should describe in

detail every functional aspect of the final product and the intent of the visual design. These documents and prototypes will be used by the production team to produce the entire product. In order to test assumptions and correct problems before the final build, it's crucial to test prototypes with a select audience to determine if they really meet their needs. The development team may build components to represent and test bits of functionality or determine resources required to launch all functionality.

Once you've answered all questions, with this careful planning already completed, there should be no surprises with time, budget or what the final product will be. final deliverables. If anything changes, the project can backtrack now before costly production starts.

4. How will we build and maintain the site?

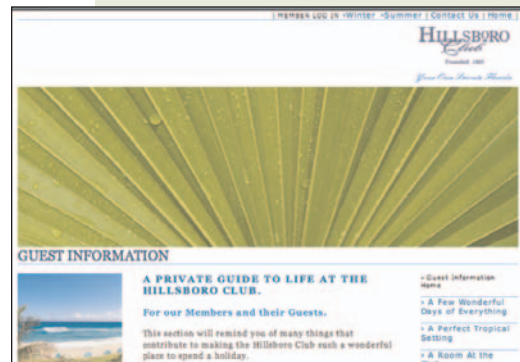
The Production Stage

The project is built at a test site on your server. Functionality and the look of the site may come together through many iterations before the final product is complete.

Test your site, once it's built. Creating a professional product means ensuring that every piece of functionality, every link, every element and every page is checked in every browser on every platform.

Have your editorial team review all the content and interactions before testing with users again to eliminate errors before releasing it for wider review.

After launching, remember to continue gathering user feedback until your next phase of development.



A Quality Experience.

This website renovation reorganized the information to support the club goals of full membership and high occupancy. Reflecting the club's integrity, it provides a private area for members while promoting programs and activities appealing to a new generation.



Why improve information design & distribution?

- 📄 Cost efficiency
- 📄 Data capture
- 📄 Improved customer service
- 📄 Enhanced productivity by using intranets to distribute content between workers
- 📄 Business efficiency
- 📄 Procedures standardization
- 📄 Staff training
- 📄 Knowledge management.

Design Tips from the Experts

■ BE APPROPRIATE

Don't let technology and eye candy get in the way of site objectives.

■ KEEP IT SIMPLE

Notice that top sites such as Google are simple designs that emphasize organized content. Make it clear where you are and where you can go. Make it easy for to do these things such as browse, buy, fill out forms and find what is needed.

■ PLAN THE BUILD.

Establish a process and stick to it. Spend enough time to planning, research and clearly define your audience and competition.

■ WORDS COUNT.

Less is often more. More is more only if it's high-quality and appropriate. Concentrate on what your offering and work with editor who understands the tone and voice of your organization.

■ FAST & COMPATIBLE

Most people feel the need for speed. No one likes to wait. Choose standard technologies that integrate well. Be sure what you've decided on will work well in all the browsers your audience uses.

■ BRAND PERSUASION

The image your organization represents distinguishes you from all others. The overall aesthetics of your site shapes perception of your organization and produces those intangible aspects of value that build emotional appeal for what you're offering.

18 Essential Steps to a successful site

1. **Document what's required** for the project: Why are you doing this, what purpose will it serve, what do you hope to accomplish and how will you know you've been successful.

2. **Gather all content** and information in all current formats and catalog in a logical form.

3. **Analysize your information** and prepare skeleton sketches for the look and feel and placement of key elements

4. **Create visual studies** of the interface design identifying style and placement of key elements.

5. **Prepare layouts** for the structure, navigation and the interactive elements of the site. Review and refine assumptions.

6. **Plan for data requirements** and content management issues

7. **Complete visual design** and specifications for building the site.

8. **Gather and format content:** text, graphics, images, audio/video, multimedia components.

9. **Behavior and functional design.**

10. **Edit and layout final content.**

11. **Create working site model.**

12. **Get a selected internal group to use the site,** gather feedback, review with development team and refine model.

13. **Test the model** on identified browsers and platforms to ensure it is functioning as planned.

14. **Developers work:** Technical integration of visual elements and content for final presentation.

15. **Test with your external users and gather feedback.**

16. **Final refinements** based on feedback and decisions and move the site to its' launch destination

17. **Limited release.** Complete integration and testing of technical components.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW.

The Right Skills for the job

- Strategic direction from the key decision makers in the organization.
- Project leadership for managing responsibilities such as deadlines, schedules, budgets, team and relationship building.
- Content organizing & writing.
- Content editing and quality assurance reviewing
- Interface design
- Software design and technical programming
- Site functionality testing.

18. **Maintain communication** and support with development team. Continue to collect user feedback and site analysis for for next development cycle.

Elevate your brand.

imedia.ca's co-founder Peter Robertson