PLANNING A WEB SITE DESIGN

Pop Ioana, Maria Micula, Florica Aldea, Sanda Micula, Liana Stanca

University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine Cluj-Napoca, str. Manastur 3-5, 400372, fax. 0264-593792, Romania, email: popioana@usamvcluj.ro

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SUMMARY

Planning a Web site is a two-part process: first you gather your development partners, analyze your needs and goals, and work through the development process outlined here to refine your plans. The second part is creating a site specification document that details what you intend to do and why, what technology and content you'll need, how long the process will take, what you will spend to do it, and how you will assess the results of your efforts. The site specification document is both the blueprint for your process and the touchstone you'll use to keep the project focused on your agreed goals and deliverables.

To create a substantial site you'll need content experts, writers, information architects, graphic designers, technical experts, and a producer or committee chair responsible for seeing the project to completion.

A short statement identifying two or three goals should be the foundation of your Web site design. The statement should include specific strategies around which the Web site will be designed, how long the site design, construction, and evaluation periods will be, and specific quantitative and qualitative measures of how the success of the site will be evaluated.

Goals and strategies: What is the mission of your organization; How will creating a Web site support your mission; What are your two or three most important goals for the site; Who is the primary audience for the Web site; What do you want the audience to think or do after having visited your site; What Web-related strategies will you use to achieve those goals; How will you measure the success of your site?

The fundamental organizing principle in Web site design is meeting users' needs. Ask yourself what your audience wants, and center your site design on their needs. Many organizations and businesses make the mistake of using their Web sites primarily to describe their administrative organization, and only secondarily do they offer the services, products, and information the average user is seeking.

There are many basic concepts that underly the field of design, categorized differently depending on philosophy or teaching methodology. All designs have certain basic elements or building blocks chosen to convey the message — beyond the actual words or photos used. How we place those items on the page determines the structure of our designs and affects the overall readability and determines how well our design communicates the desired message. The principles of design govern that placement and structure.

Graphic design encompasses the creation of a great many types of projects focusing on the elements and principles of design. Different instructors or designers have their own idea about the basic principles of design but most are encompassed in the 6 principles of: balance, proximity, alignment, repetition or consistency, contrast, white space.