



THE DEGREE SHOW WEBSITE
REPORT BY ALEX FULLER

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INTRODUCTION

At the very beginning of Final Major Project, I had decided to carry forward my idea from a previous unit called Intelligent web. The idea was to create an app that helped young professionals prepare their meals for the week. The app allowed users to add meals into a Mon-Sun list that then exported those meals ingredients into a list, they could then order those items from the list from their preferred supermarket. Up until around mid-March I was adamant that I would be creating the Nosh App, until I was called into The Degree Show office.

The Degree Show is an annual event run by students to showcase final year students work. I was asked if I could come on-board and offer up my skills to help build this years event website. I'd built the events previous website, so I had some experience in the process involved. I said yes and arranged with my course lecturer to use this as my Final Major Project, as it would take up a lot of my time. He agreed and I began preparation.

This report will outline the “behind-the-scenes” tasks that took place while I was working on the degree show website. It will outline in detail every step taken, what problems I faced along the way and how I resolved them. It will outline my role within The Degree Show in great lengths, going through tasks that I undertook.

Before I began my final major project, I had to write up and agree a contract. This contract outlined what I'd be producing for my final major project. I have included this contract below:

“AC1 - Evidence of a methodical approach to the development of either a substantial practical or intellectual piece of work:

Provide evidence of design, development and management skills in coordinating the build of The Degree Show 2014 website. This year The Degree show has a team of students working to create its event

website. Students will need to be guided on various tasks for the build-up to the website launch and also when the site is made public.

AC2 - The completion of a complex project:

Project work flow. Taking from previous experience, using UX/UI development techniques, show evidence of a planned out work flow. This should cover research, development, design, build, testing and then the launch. It should also provide details of how the website will function before and during the event.

AC3 - An analysis of the context and potential value of the work produced:

Assess and analysis how well you thought you did in certain aspects throughout the project. Strengths and weakness, as well as where you think you could improve.”

AC = Assessment Criteria



THE PROCESS

The process I underwent was a four step process. This process was created from researching other designer's process and from experience of working as a freelancer. The four step process includes Discovery, Conceptualise, Visualise and Launch. Following the process ensures that all "materials" are gathered to complete the work that I've set out to do. It also helps when designing, as everything I need (eg. colour scheme) is their in-front of me.

The first step in the process is Discovery. This stage is finding out about the brand or product I will be designing for. Going over any branding guidelines they may have that will affect the design process. Learning about their target market. Who are they? How old are they? Are they a specific gender? Where do they live? etc. (I'll answer these questions in the next section) Finally learning about the purpose of the website. When the user loads up the website, what do we want them to do?

The second step is Conceptualise. This stage helps with the visualise stage. In this stage a site map is agreed on. The site map represents what pages will be on the website and where they will be located. This helps with knowing what pages need to be designed. User stories are created, these help decide what the website will be used for regarding the sorts of users that will visit. Wire-frames are made to decide where certain elements will be placed on the page. Lastly, design inspiration is gathered to help with the visualise stage. This is usually a collection of sites/vectors that I'd like to implement in some way in my designs.

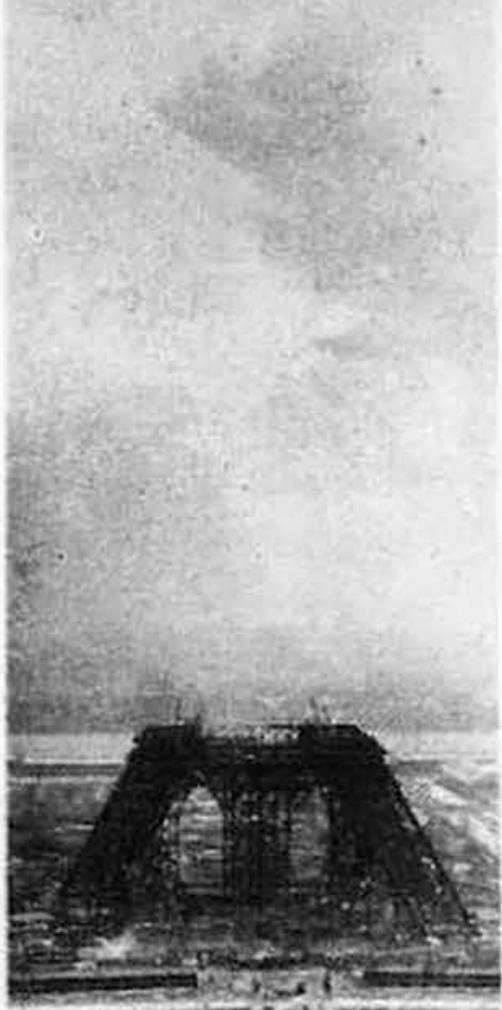
The third stage is visualise. This is the first time I'd have opened Photoshop throughout the whole project. It's no use trying to design something when research hasn't been done. First step in the visualise stage is to turn all the wire-frames that were created in the previous stage to beautifully designed PSD's that can be given to a developer to build within the browser. Just like the wire-frames, every page will need to be

designed, so the developer isn't left in the dark. Build is also included in the visualise stage as it's the best way to represent the functionality of the website. This is normally only viewable to those involved in the website project.

The final stage is launch, which is quite self explanatory. This stage is where the website is sent out into the World Wide Web. Before that can happen validation and testing must be completed. As a designer the only stage that I was involved in was the usability testing. I needed to find out whether the website I had built was usably. If not, then we have a problem.



14 décembre 1887



15 mars 1888



10 avril 1888



14 novembre 1888



26 décembre 1888



20 janvier 1889

DISCOVERY

The discovery stage is pretty self-explanatory. It's about discovering as much as I can about the product or service that I am creating a website for. It's about learning the target market. Who will be visiting the website? How old will they be? Where are they located? Are they male or female? Asking and answering these questions help very much with the way a website should be designed. For example, if I'm to design a website that would attract professionals, I'd probably avoid using bright colours such as pink and yellow.

The discovery stage was pretty straight forward. I sat down with Marc the events organiser and discussed these sorts of questions with him. It was clear that the target market for this website would be family and friends of those showcasing work and also industry, who'd like to see the work that has been produced by final year Ravensbourne Students. That's our market, and that's who I need to sell the website to. Immediately professionalism sprung to mind. Industry are used to seeing professionalism, they are professionals themselves, they expect it. That's what I wanted to do with the website. That's what I knew I need to do.

Next stage of discovery was figuring out what the use of the website would be. We've got family, friends and industry onto the website, now what? "BOOK TICKETS" was the immediate response I received. Clearly this is what needed to be done. A clear path to book tickets.



CONCEPTUALISE

As previously discussed the conceptualise stage consists of four different stages. The four stages include Sitemap, User Stories, Wireframes and Design Inspiration. The sitemap was completed by Marc, as event organiser he knew what needed to be on the website. User stories help with certain features that may or may not need to be implemented. Wireframes help with where content needs to be placed throughout the website. I use design inspiration to get started on the visualise stage.

The original sitemap contained 11 pages, including: Home, The Event, Meet The Team, News/Updates, Articles, Tickets, Friends/Family Booking, Industry Booking, Graduate Portfolios, On-Air and Contact. The up-to-date sitemap contains the following pages: Home, Ticket Registration, What's On, Monday 16th, Tuesday 17th, Wednesday 18th, Thursday 19th, Friday 20th, The Degree Show Awards, Meet The Team, Partners, All News and Contact.

The next step was the create user stories. As I've said the user stories help with what we should include on the website, an example of this would be this user story: As a visitor, I'd like sign up to the event so that I can attend the event. Very simple, but can be very helpful. Stories can be created for every user of the website, even admins.

An important step in the conceptualise stage was to create wireframes. Previously I hadn't used wireframes very much, but after this project I can see how vital they are in the design process. Just how a developer needs designs to build a website, designers need wireframes to design. It helped knowing where each element needed to be on certain pages and it made the design process go very smoothly. I created wireframes for every page.

Last stage was finding inspiration for the design. I had a rough idea about how I wanted the website to look, but looking at examples made me picture it a lot clearly. One thing I wish I had done was create a mood board of sorts.



VISUALISE

Visualise stage was the most enjoyable. It's like when an artist has a fresh canvas in-front of them and it's time to start making shapes and mixing colours. The visualise stage is the stage that I enjoy the most. It's the stage that I can take all the research I've done from the previous stages, open up Photoshop and start to create.

Just like the wireframes, I created a PSD mockup for every page that was going to be on the site. This not only helped me visualise the site, it also really helped the developers out when building. There was never a moment when a developer was unsure about what a page needed to look like. I even designed the 404 page.

get their teeth into the project, though I did work alongside with them making sure functionality was how I imagined it. I've worked with developers who don't have a great eye for design, luckily it wasn't the case this time. Though I did have to modify some markup to make the site pixel perfect.

The build stage was more for the developers to

The Degree Show

20 June 2014

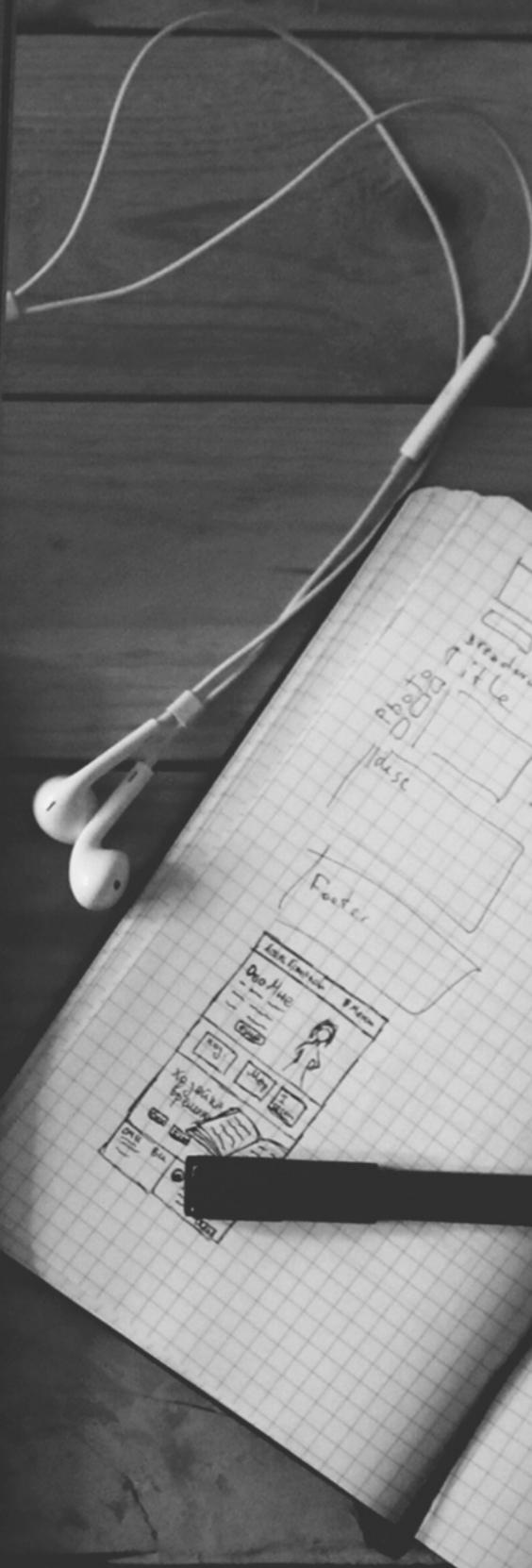
4pm - 10pm

Ravensbourne

BOOK YOUR PLACE

Who are we?

nt showcase to be at this summer. Ravensbourne's immense talent gathers for one week to celebrate the class of
ent, with courses from Animation to Web Media exhibiting their very best work. TDS has been a starting block for



LAUNCH

The launch stage was mostly for the developers to really shine and get their stuff done. While they were busy making sure the website worked in all browsers, including the dreaded IE and making sure all their code was valid, I was making sure the website was usable through the power of usability testing.

I asked five students to undertake my usability test. It involved them following a set of instructions that I laid out to them. They had to achieve each step, all while I was recording the screen. I recorded the screen to see where they clicked and how long it took to complete each stage. Interestingly one major problem arose after the first test, the user could not get back to the main website from the ticket website. We amended this issue by adding the logo to the top of the tickets page.

The launch was massively overdue by almost a month, but in the end we managed to get a working website live. The website is currently serving its original purpose, which is to allow those who wish to attend the event to book tickets.



PROJECT MANAGEMENT

In my final submission for Final Major Project, I talked about the tools I used to accomplish solid project management throughout. Here I shall talk about how managing a team of around 5 people went, problems that arose and how we overcame them as a team.

The main issue that the team had to deal with was everyone else's schedule. As there was no set location that we'd all be commencing work, if we needed something from a member of the team we had to wait for them to become available. This delayed the project on a variety of occasions, hence why we missed the deadline for launch, which was originally the 2nd April.

To collate all the tasks that we had to complete, we used Progress, an online project management tool set up by The Degree Show management. Though after a few weeks of using we found it wasn't an appropriate management tool for the team and we scraped using it. We moved all the tasks over to a Excel spreadsheet on Google Drive. This spreadsheet contained detailed to-do lists for all members with estimated hours for completion. The document also has a functionality tab that helped the developers with the build. This contained instructions like: Homepage//Book Ticket Button//OnHover: Background white transparency 0.5. Drive also contained all the wireframe and PSD files so the developers could access them at any time. This proved useful as developers seem to chose interesting working hours, 3am in the morning to be precise, a time that I wasn't available.

The team only had one falling out throughout the

whole project and this was down to a complete misunderstanding that was rectified straight away.

Though we had lots of remote interaction, I think most of the team benefited from Face-to-face meetings. As a designer it can sometimes be hard to get ideas across through text. All the team found it much easier to understand my vision when I explained it through these meetings.



REFLECTION

Reflection is good and reflect I shall. This section of the report will reflect on each area I talked about above. How I'd like do them different if I had the opportunity to do it all over again. What I found good about the project and what I've learnt.

This project was the first time I'd used a process to guide me through a design process and quite honestly I've been wrong not to use one. I've found the whole process very rewarding. Knowing the product inside-out has helped me a lot. Coming up with the process took a bit of research and experience from freelancing to finalise. I knew I needed a four step process, one where I learnt about the product I was designing for, one where I come up with concept ideas to present, one where I physically visualise the final product and one that presented the end, finished result.

The discovery stage was quite an easy stage. I spoke with Marc Walsh who is the events organiser about what he wanted the site to be used for. His immediate response was "to book tickets." I found this very similar to, when freelancing, talking to the client about what they want to get out of their website. Next was finding out who we'd be targeting this ticket booking at. It was clear that we'd be aiming this at family and friends of graduates and industry. At this stage I'd have liked to conducted a bit more research about the target market. Find out what they expect from an event website like this and whether they just wanted to go on the page to book tickets. This is something I'll keep in mind for next time.

The conceptualise stage was where my work truly began. The sitemap was provided to me by Marc, but this change quite a lot as the project went forward. This is something I accounted for, from experience building the website the year before. I created the navigation menu in a way that lots more pages could be added to it without impacting the design. User stories were essential in the conceptualise stage, it enabled me to work out what each user would do

when they visited the website. This was very helpful when creating the wire-frames. Next wire-frames, I used a program called SwordSoft Layout to create them. I wasn't given any content at this stage so a lot of what would be on the page was down to me. I did speak with Marc about what he expected to see on each page, but this was very basic. He was happy with what I produced. Last was design inspiration, I used a site called Site Inspire to find websites that I liked. I'd have liked to have found more examples and use more elements next time.

Visualise was quite a big stage for both me and the developers. I designed the mock-ups using Photoshop, which is my preferred software. This stage seemed to slot in nicely and went really smooth, this was down to the planning I did before hand.

Final stage was launch, this stage I stepped back and allowed the developers to do what they needed to do. Though I did step in at certain stages to modify certain design aspects on the website. Next time I'd make measurements more clear in the design.

As I discussed already in the Project Management section. Time management was a major issue on this project and it's something I'd pay close attention to next time round. It's key for a project to remain on schedule, otherwise it messes up plans.

In conclusion I think this project went really well. I'm glad that I chose to change paths and design the website rather than make an app. At the end of the day the final major project is suppose to represent what you can do, so potential employers can see, building apps is something I find interesting, but not what I want to do as a career, designing and building websites is. If I had to do the project again I think the only thing I'd improve would be time management. The project was massively behind schedule, which made management very nervous.





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