ENSE 271 Project report-out & lessons learned

Team name & members

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Project sponsor

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Business need/opportunity

The business need identified for this project revolves around the lack of refinement of the current IABC Regina website. In consequence of the rough website, non member experiences on the site lead to negative prejudice towards the association. After all, for professional communicators to be taken seriously all of their lines of communication should be excellent, whether it be a one way or two way line of communication. Negative thoughts will lead to negative emotions towards the organization and decrease involvement.

The opportunity that this project seeks to satisfy is the opportunity to improve public opinion of the association, increase memberships, garner positive emotions from users to encourage repeat visitors, and as a consequence increase the appeal for employers to advertise through the IABC Regina chapter. Increasing the appeal for advertisers will likely increase the number and frequency of advertisements posted to the IABC website thus increasing the profitability of this source of income.

Reflections on project planning

- State selected north star & carryover customers selected

The northstar customers that are focused on are non IABC members and casual visitors. By creating an intuitive and delightful experience for first time users they are more likely to return to the site and become involved with the association. By virtue of this, job posters become a significant carryover customer. Job posters will indirectly gain from the advantages

designed for non members since their advertisements will receive more exposure. Existing IABC Regina members are carryover customers who will benefit from an intuitive interface and easy to navigate website since it will improve their day to day experience on the site. Site administrators are the last category of carryover customer. Similarly to member userse, site administrators will benefit from an easy to use interface in their day to day activities.

- Summarize assumptions made and constraints uncovered

Assumptions made include assumptions of the technological abilities of the administrators, that the IABC Regina website is at most an occasionally accessed website,

Constraints that were uncovered include a limited budget, limited availability of user data, limitations of Wordpress' capabilities, and security vulnerability of the Wordpress site. The limited budget was a known constraint going into the project, it was not a significant constraint for us it simply meant that we avoided any paid services that we could. Limited data on user behaviour is another known constraint, this meant that we had to make a great deal of assumptions about user behaviour and user types. Wordpress' customizability was a significant constraint, we had to be creative and clever in order to get the site to look something close to what we had envisioned. Security vulnerabilities surrounding Wordpress plugins meant that we had to both be careful of what plugins we selected and how many we used. We stuck to popular, reputable plugins and used as few as we could realistically get away with.

- Summarize key findings from affinity diagramming, empathy mapping.

From empathy mapping it is found that the IABC Regina members see an aging, messy webpage which makes them feel cluttered and disoriented. The aging web design frustrates them as they manage the site themselves and suffer from a lack of support. Lastly IABC Regina hears from its customers that their website is difficult to navigate.

These issues can be condensed into three primary pain points. First, the website is unattractive and navigation is confusing. Second, the website is too difficult to manage and there is little support to help them figure things out. And last, there is too much information on the site. Information is often repeated and often useless.

From these pain points we can deduce what IABC Regina has to gain. This project has the potential to give an attractive and easy to use website, use currently supported modern technology, and make the website easy to maintain.

From affinity diagramming it is easy to see that there is a large desire for simplicity in design. There should be an intuitive way to navigate the site, site administration should be as easy as possible, and a way to communicate or interact with members is a must.

- Discuss initial & evolution of your USM/MVP (why is what you produced an MVP?)

In early discussions of MVPs features that were discussed that were not implemented include social media functionality and a local (non third party) payment method. Social media was thrown out since it was felt that implementing a local blog functionality was more important. The non third party payment method was thrown out since it was over zealous if we were not going to use a paid service. Something that was a hot topic amongst the team was the login/account functionality, on one hand it is likely possible to implement the desired features without having accounts but on the other hand accounts made things easier and improved security. Ultimately we chose to implement an account system and designed the website around the assumption that user accounts existed.

The final product is an MVP since it meets critical design criteria while being open to improvements and refinement. The design is simple, intuitive, easy to maintain and update, makes use of modern technology, and allows the IABC Regina chapter to communicate with their members and the public. Potential future MVP's include non third party payment functionality, fleshing out the about us page, and implementing a sign up system that members can use to let the organization know who is planning on attending an event.

- Summarize prototyping activities and findings. Ensure you discuss how your team linked design ideas back to a minimum of three topics discussed in class relating to people-centred design (affordances, gestalt, constraints, etc.)

Our first step in the prototyping process involved brainstorming together, splitting up and designing separately, and then coming together and harmonizing our ideas as a team. This was effective to gain a variety of ways to present users with affordances and how to organize the pages. As the project went on the task of prototyping a refined design was pushed to a single team member while the others began building the final version of the site.

We implemented design topics such as affordances in the sticky menu in Get Involved, the IABC logo as a home navigation, add post button as a post creation action, and many navigation affordances in our buttons. Signifiers were also greatly used in our prototyping, we experimented with arrows to signify navigation, a row of circles with one darkened to signify a carousel position, and icons as signifiers of pages. Getsalts was used in our blog postings layout. Natural mapping in the circles to identify the slides position in a carousel. Metaphorical icons in our use of icons as page signifiers.

Reflections on project results

- Summarize how you felt about this project (likes/dislikes)

Bryden-

I felt pretty good about our wordpress solution overall. It's aesthetically pleasing and I trust that if we handed it off to the IABC Regina board to use they wouldn't be

troubled in adding or removing blog posts and events or adding or removing advertisement slides to the homepage slider or the career page slides.

However it was very frustrating trying to implement our solution within the constraints of wordpress. Small changes were often tedious, time consuming and sometimes unsuccessful.

Shane-

I am happy and even impressed by the end product we ended up with, the finishedness of the project skyrocketed in the final five days prior to completion. It is attractive and as far as I can tell (as not the customer) it is easy to use and maintain. The team was motivated and productive while not overzealous, this made it easy to split up labour and know that everything would be done when it had to be.

Using wordpress collaboratively was a giant pain, Wordpress' level of customizability is also quite restrictive. A different technology might have better suited our designing style. The presentation did not go as planned, due to tech issues I missed out on discussing the northstar customer, vision, and home page. Luckily Bryden took the torch and got the ball rolling for us. Choking on the presentation was a major dislike of mine from the project, I feel we had a lot to show and alot to tell and that the presentation did not reflect the quality of what we had to offer.

Alish-

I am beyond impressed with the progress we made in such a short duration of time. I would have really loved it if we had gotten more feedback from our users, so that we could deliver an even better product which would be best to their liking and useability. I am glad to be a part of such a team where everyone collaborated very well and communicated efficiently in our scrums.

Only thing I regret is not giving enough time to this project because of other projects and classes and so on, but even so I am satisfied that everything worked out great and our customer loved the final product and so did we.

● Summarize what went well during the project

Organizing ourselves and dividing tasks amongst team members was a very easy task with the frequent meetings and checkups we had.

Communication between team members made it easy for us to work together and get through tough tasks.

New designs and implementation ideas were always reviewed by other team members in a timely fashion.

The team was not afraid to revise existing work and flexibly make changes as conditions changed.

- Summarize what not went well during the project

Transferring work form one person to another was an issue throughout the project. There is an easily accessible post and page exporter in wordpress that we took advantage of, but there were many problems that arose with this solution. The generated export file did not specify which pages were saved into it, so it was easy to generate an empty export file or one with the wrong content. Importing the files was a hassle because you had to remove any same name file from your wordpress site to get the import working and all imported pages and posts had to be converted from drafts to published. Worst of all this solution did not cover anything outside of pages and posts. So a document named external changes was created to cover things like how to install and implement a plugin used on a page, what the global colour scheme was set to, how to set the header, footer, menus, and what images go where on the page. This solution was unideal and caused many problems with poor documentation which caused more issues with misreading the information.

- How successful was your team and translating prototypes into WordPress reality?

Our team was fairly successful with the translation. We were able to generate a semblance of our prototype but a perfect recreation was found to be impossible. It was very tough to alter the padding of some blocks or the padding between blocks. Positioning blocks or resizing buttons were other tasks we had a lot of trouble with.

- Did you find that the people-centred design ideas discussed in lectures helped/hindered your design explorations?

People-centered design ideas while feeling somewhat constrictive at a glance actually helped us move forward in a constructive direction. As discussed in class controlling behaviours can be useful if they are not suffocating and it seems that structuring our design using people-centered principles did just that. Considering people-centered principles as constraints we explored fewer directions but were pushed to explore more useful directions. We didn't pursue aesthetics too hard or overdesign our site and focused rather on the user experience and creating a website that is easy to use and non intimidating to a novice user. Without the application of people-centered design it is likely that we would have focused too much on aesthetics and "neat" features, this would have left us with a cluttered and feature creeped product similar to what the old website suffered. This would have been difficult to use for any user let alone a new one. By following principles of people-centered design the end product is easy to use and accessible to users over a wide range of skill levels.

- What would you do the same on future projects?

Brainstorming aggressively and discussing even ridiculous ideas is a great way to encourage innovation and trust among the team. While hearing that an idea is bad might put someone down, it is better to have all ideas heard and make people feel they are worth listening to than simply ignoring them. Frequent scrum style check ins during the final sprints of the project are effective in keeping everyone informed, allowing team members to know who might need extra help, and of course correct if someone is veering off path.

- What would you do differently on future projects?

In future projects exploring different website building tools from wordpress is something that we would consider.

- Summarize opportunities and design ideas for future work

To make the prototype to solution transition easier, we could take a look at wordpress templates and prototype with the wordpress implementation in mind. This way we could cut down significantly on time spent creating fully custom parts of the web page and instead reuse existing sections in creative ways.

WordPress themes and plugins

Theme name	User rating	Last Updated	Cost	# of active installations	Description of use
Astra	4.9/5	<1mo	free	1,000,000	Header, footer and menus

Plugin name	User rating	Last updated	Cost	# of active installations	Description of use
Smart slider 3	5/5	1mo	free	700,000	A slider creation and display tool. Used on the home and career pages.
Sticky Menu (or Anything!) on Scroll	5/5	1mo	$39 once	100,000	Sticky menu used in get involved page
Ultimate Addons for Gutenberg	5/5	<1mo	free	300,000	Grid of blog posts on home and events page
UsersWP	4.5/5	<1mo	free	10,000	Login/logout functionality

					from the header
WPForms Lite	5/5	<1mo	$39.50 /year	4,000,000	Form tool used in post a job

Why We Recommend Premium Plugins:

WPForms premium can include payment fields into the posting forum. Using this feature we could have a way for users to make payments and restrict the form from submitting until the payment was made. We explored other plugins which provided payments embedded in forms, but they were not aesthetically pleasing for users, and some of the payment forms were overwhelming in terms of page management.

Sticky Menu (or Anything!) on Scroll premium can have multiple sticky items. This way we can have a large menu for desktop version and a small menu for the mobile version.

Why Astra Theme:

The Astra theme was primarily selected due to it having the best header/footer builder of any theme we experimented with. It is easy to use and manages images and logos well compared to alternatives we explored. The Astra theme also has an easy to use menu builder which we took advantage of.

Alternative themes that were experimented with include Twenty Twenty-one, Twenty Twenty, Twenty Nineteen, Neve and Colibri WP.