

Journey Bly

Professor Gehl

Comm 3510

10 Dec. 2019

The Final Report

Designing and building a website for a client was very new to me at the beginning of the semester. However, sticking to a design process and schedule, as well as working closely with my client made the project move along with ease. The first step I took was just to talk to my client, Natalie, and to get to know her. This was very informal, just a general meeting to get an idea of what kind of a website she wanted. From this I was able to learn that Natalie is a travel agent and wanted a site that would inform users of the work she does and how she became interested in it. Next, I typed up a Google Doc with more specific questions to ask Natalie about her site. These questions asked about the theme, visual metaphor, users, requirements, colors, and overall feeling for the site. I shared the Google Doc with Natalie so she could write her responses. I found this step very helpful in really capturing how the design should be. I think it is very helpful for the client as well to organize their thoughts about the site and put them into words. At this point in the process I had mentioned this interview step to a family member who was in the process of having a website made for her company and she said she did not even know what she wanted in her site until she pondered those questions. So, I would say this “client needs assessment” is a very critical component of a good design process. The next thing I did was review the answers Natalie gave me and made a list of all of the most important things to include in the website. I then put each of these things on index cards and grouped the cards into

logical categories. Once I had my categories, I gave each one a name that would become a point of navigation to a new page on the site. I also mixed up the cards and had a family member organize them as well. Her categories ended up being very similar to mine. I ended up sticking with the organization I had created because it was very similar and the way I had put mine made a bit more sense for how I was beginning to picture the design in my head. Once I had the organization of the site figured out, I moved on to thinking about the users by creating primary and secondary personas. I based this information off of what Natalie had told me her typical clients are like. Truthfully, this did not seem to have very much of an effect on the design choices I made. I definitely would not scrap this step in the future, though. Even though it did not seem to make much of an impact on the outcome of this particular project, I can definitely imagine it having an impact on future ones. It is always important to think about who will be using the site.

The rest of the design process was more applied. Once all of the logistical aspects were taken care of, it was time to start creating something tangible. The first step in this second half of the process was a black and white sketch on graph paper. For my black and white sketch I took my ideas and put them to paper. I tried to make my sketch as close to scale as possible, and the final layout ended up being quite similar to this original sketch. After showing Natalie the sketch and receiving her very positive feedback, I did another sketch with color. The color scheme in this sketch was nowhere near what the actual color scheme ended up being, which I learned is just part of the process. The colors Natalie and I had talked about did not end up looking right with the theme once I began coding. I went through several alternative color schemes, getting Natalie's opinion on each one before finally landing on a good fit for the site. I ended up pulling the final colors from an image on the site, which I think really helped to tie the whole design

together and keep consistency throughout the site. The next step was just using HTML and CSS to build the site. I referred to the information I had received from Natalie as well as my sketches as I coded, which made the process pretty simple. There is definitely a lot to be said about doing a lot of good planning at the beginning of the process. It makes coding the site so much easier. Not to say that I did not face challenges and problems along the way. Coding is very fun, but can be endlessly frustrating at the same time. Luckily, I was able to receive help in class as well as from Internet resources such as W3Schools and Stack Overflow. As I coded, I kept in mind the inspiration I had drawn from existing travel websites/blogs as well as the theme and visual metaphors Natalie and I had discussed. As the project came together, I added small details to enhance the style of the website such as borders around pictures and headings. I feel that these small touches really added to the design, while still keeping it clean. Once I had a solid prototype of my site, I conducted tests on it to ensure it was performing well. The first test I conducted was a HTML validation test. I used the W3C Markup Validation Service to check my code for any errors. The test came out clean on the first try which I greatly attribute to a good design process and checking the code at each stage. The second test I did was navigating the site in different Internet browsers. This test proved to be very helpful as I did find some issues and inconsistencies across browsers. These were mostly minor details that were easy to fix, such as my links changing colors on different browsers. However, one larger issue was that in a couple of the browsers the spacing of elements of the site was very squished and distorted. Additionally, I had coded my site entirely on my laptop, so I noticed that the spacing also changed on smaller and larger screens. This was an issue that I was not able to address easily on my own and did not have time to work on at this point in the semester. However, I have been informed about

responsive web design methods and would definitely take the time to learn and implement them in future projects. The final test I conducted was an accessibility test. In class we learned the importance of making sure your site is accessible by all users, including those with disabilities. To do this, I used a screen reader (ChromeVox) to navigate my site as if I had compromised vision. I turned the screen reader on and closed my eyes. I then used only the keyboard to tab through the site as it read to me. My site proved to be very accessible. I had kept accessibility in mind as I coded after talking about it in class. So, I had already included alt tags for all of the pictures on my site and made the layout flow logically from left to right and top to bottom.

The final step I took before considering my project complete was to show my site to my close family and friends, as well as to my classmates to receive constructive feedback. After presenting my site in class, I took comments from my peers to heart and tried to incorporate their feedback. One of these comments was to align the icons in the footer to be centered under each other to provide a cleaner look. Another common request I received in class was to make the boxes with Natalie's favorite destinations on the About page links. So, now users can click on the destinations and be taken to a new tab (yay `target="_blank"`) with the Google travel guide page for that particular destination. Of course, throughout this time I was still constantly showing Natalie the updates and getting her feedback. She expressed a lot of happiness with the final product, which was very heartwarming as the designer.

I have learned so much this semester, not only about coding, but about working with a client as well. I feel that the skills I gained will be extremely helpful in future projects. Aside from web design, being able to work well with a client and to create a detailed plan will come in useful in a variety of projects. It will help with future group projects in school, as well as help in

future jobs. Being able to work well with people, create detailed plans, and stick to a schedule are all important skills to have for any project. Truthfully, this class has even made me consider expanding on the web design skills I learned and pursuing web design as a side job. I really enjoyed the whole process and think it is something I would do well at.