

Judge a Book by it's Cover

/ Best web design practices

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Hi everybody. I'm Liz.

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Hi all. I'm Liz. I am currently the Head of Web Development at Wunder Werkz a design studio in Denver.

I've spent the last six years helping companies convey their brand's identity and missions in engaging and meaningful online presences. I've worked at agencies and startups and I've even freelanced a bit. I've done full stack, and front end frameworks and UI/UX, but what I really love is figuring out how to turn a brand's identity into a digital experience.

What is this talk about?

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What am I going to talk about this evening?

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This talk is about how to create a web presence that gets you the most ROI for your goals.

The 411

- ✚ Strategies for a well-designed web presence
- ✚ Best practices for web design
- ✚ Measuring success

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In this talk I will cover

1. Strategies to implement when setting out on a web project to help you avoid bad practices
2. Go through best practices to keep in mind when designing and building your web presence
3. How to measure the success of your web presence

/ 75% of consumers admit to making judgements on a company's credibility based on the company's web design

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According to web credibility research from Stanford, “75% of consumers make judgements on a company’s credibility based on their web design”

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This means that when it comes to a web presence people are judging a book by its cover so to speak



2013. Retrieved from: <https://weheartit.com/entry/52719491>

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Yes, it's our worst nightmare. When customers are on the internet they basically become Regina George. So one of the first things we have to be aware of when creating a web presence is that design matters.

Know what bad design looks like

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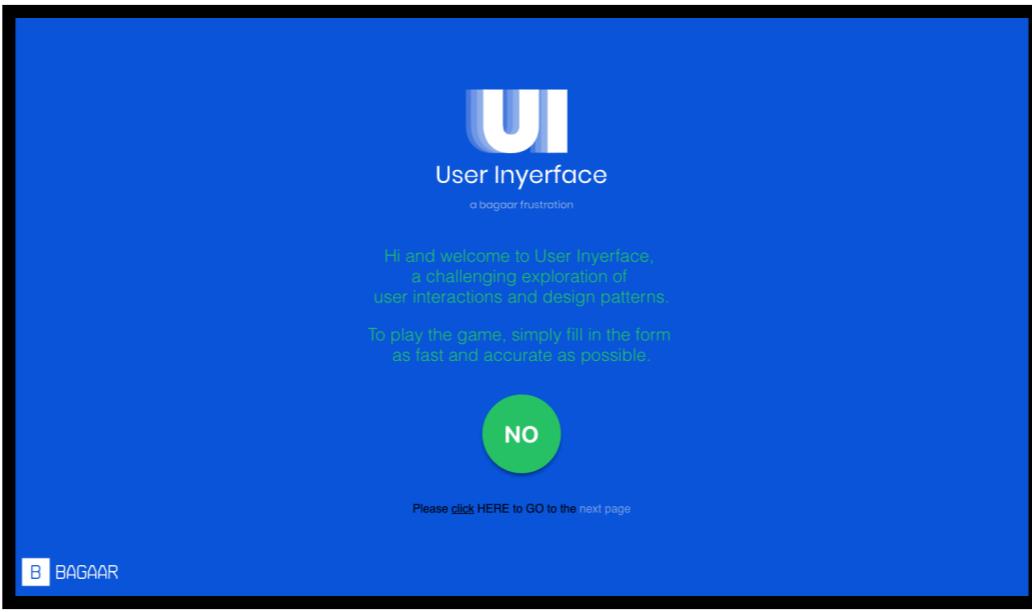
Before you start making good design, you must first understand what bad design looks like.
Bad design isn't just too many fonts and patterned backgrounds

The screenshot shows the homepage of [www.ARNGREN.net](http://arngren.net/). The page is filled with a grid of numerous small product thumbnails, each with a price tag. The products include various types of off-road vehicles (e.g., el-ATV, el-Scooter), drones, RC models, and other electronic gadgets. The layout is cluttered and overwhelming, typical of a 'spam' or 'scam' website.

<http://arngren.net/>

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(although it is sometimes those things). While appearance is important, it's absolute garbage if there's no strategy behind it.



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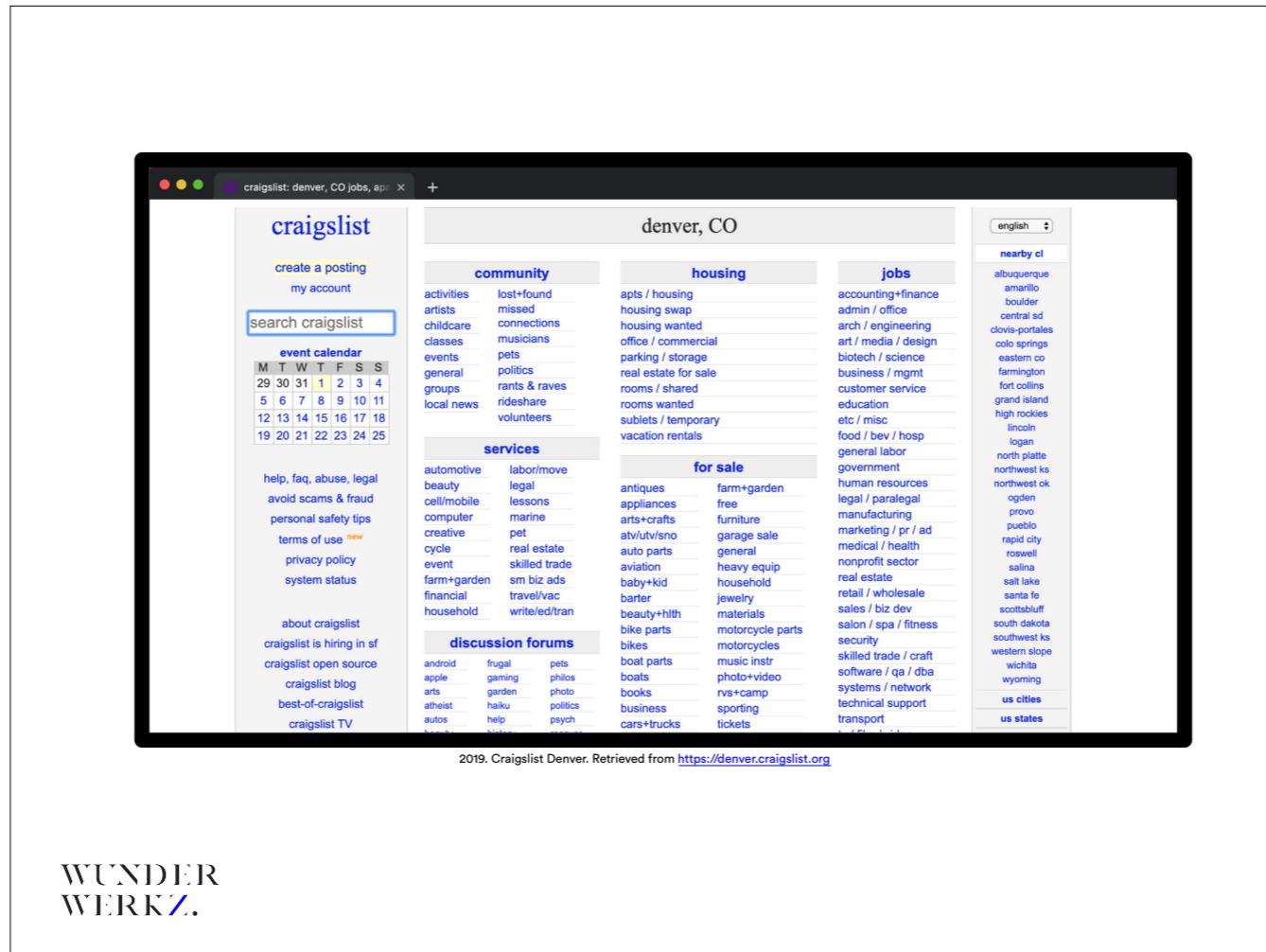
This is a video of me using (or attempting to use) User Inyerface which is game from Bagaar that was built to highlight the importance of UI in design.

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While it doesn't necessarily look bad (I mean I've seen worse), it is near impossible to use. If you're up for a real challenge in patience then give this game a try.

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Conversely, just because something doesn't look designed doesn't mean the design isn't good



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Take Craigslist for example. Inarguably, not very exciting design. Does that make it bad? No. Craigslist, despite having not really changed their design for 20 years (which in the Internet world is like a bajillion) still has incredible UI.

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Bad design doesn't happen when things don't look pretty, bad design happens when your process lacks forethought, research and strategy.

Bad design happens when

- + No Purpose
- + No Clarity
- + Not Accessible
- + Not User Oriented
- + Not Usable

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So what makes a design bad:

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No purpose: It doesn't matter how good your site looks if there's no strategy behind it, it's bad design.

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No clarity: If your site is trying to do too many things at once

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Not Accessible: 85% of adults think that a company's website when viewed on a mobile device should be as good or better than its desktop website so you need to make sure it looks good on mobile.

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Not User Oriented: In short know your audience. Don't build something for you, build something for the your target audience.

//

Not Usable: Make sure the dang thing works how it's supposed to and that the people that are supposed to use it understand how it's supposed to work. 88% of online consumers are less likely to return to a site after a bad experience

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Keep these things top of mind when working on any web-based project.

Getting to what's right

/ Makin' a plan and stickin' to it

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How can you implement strategies to help you avoid bad design altogether

Help yourself

Ask the right questions up front

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The first step in any strategy is not putting the cart before the horse so to speak. Before you start throwing images into a CMS, make a plan for your site by asking yourself the right questions

The right questions are about

- + Purpose

- + Users

- + Design

- + (Budget)

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Questions should fall into the following buckets:

Purpose

Users

Design

Budget

Purpose

- + In a brief sentence describe what your company does (what are your products and services)?
- + What are your primary goals?
- + What are your secondary goals?
- + What is your unique selling proposition (what makes you different)?

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Purpose :: Purpose questions should allow you to codify your goals, purpose and desired outcomes for your project

Who are you and what is your vision?

What are your primary goals for the site?

Any secondary goals?

Goals should be specific: Get more people to click on homepage, get more people to complete sales, get more people to call my business

Goals should not be vague: Make it look better,

Goals should not be without purpose: Add more pages

Goals should not be other people's goals: Make it look like our competitors

User

- + Who is your primary user?
- + Any secondary users?
- + What are their ages, demographics, socioeconomic backgrounds?
- + What is your users' primary goal (why are they visiting your site)?
- + What competitors might your user encounter?

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User Questions Should allow you to build a profile of the project's target audience

Who is your primary user?

Any secondary users?

What are their ages, demographics, socioeconomic background?

What are their primary goals?

Who is the project for?

A lot of time people who build websites focus on what is best for them and forget about their users. While a web presence is the digital representation of your brand it's important not to lose sight of who is coming to your site and why

Design

- + What kind/types of content do you need to have on the site?
- + What content is most important?
- + What functionality do you know you need?
- + Do you currently have brand guidelines?

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Design : Design questions are less about colors and fonts and more about content, structure and functionality. You're designing a blueprint here, not painting the walls (yet)

What kind of content do you need to have on the site

What content do you want to have (types and categories)

What content is most important

What functionality do you know you need

Stick to your brand guidelines, not your personal preferences. It's great if you like blue but that doesn't mean blue should be the background color of your site.

Budget

+ What is your budget for this project?

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Budget :: Never enter a project without setting a budget for yourself, this is true for web too. If you don't have a huge budget, streamline your content, better to go with a less is more approach here than have too much and everything be disjointed and chaotic because you were trying to cram too many things into a small budget.

Also since many of you may be building your own sites know what your own time is worth? If you spend 100 hours figuring out how to build a website, just because you built it doesn't mean it cost you nothing, sometimes it's cheaper to hire someone with experience even if you want to use a template site as your base.

Make a mission statement

/ The site should be XX for XX it will do this by XX

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After gathering info you should be able to come up with a mission statement for the project.

The mission statement should provide guidance around the project purpose “the site should do xx”, the users “for xx” and the design “by xx” or how it will achieve the purpose for the users.

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Basically the same as a mission statement for your business. The project mission statement will set the tone and give context for decision making.

Do research and repeat

/ Become an expert if you aren't already

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In addition to the mission statement do some research (i.e., look at some competitor sites).

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If your goal is to become #1 in customer service
research existing web tools that could help you achieve that goal,
research other companies who are great at customer service and pinpoint what makes them great,
look at what they could be doing better,
look at industry competitors and determine where they are falling short, research the user demographic and see how they like to be helped.

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And now you can start building your site....

Don't paint the walls yet

/ Making a blueprint

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Not so fast. You're excited, I get it. You have all this great information and you're ready to start putting stuff on the Internet. Think again.

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The further down the road of building a website you are, the more expensive and time consuming it is to fix mistakes.

The easiest way to avoid bad web practices is to make sure you aren't making big "leaps" without thinking things through.

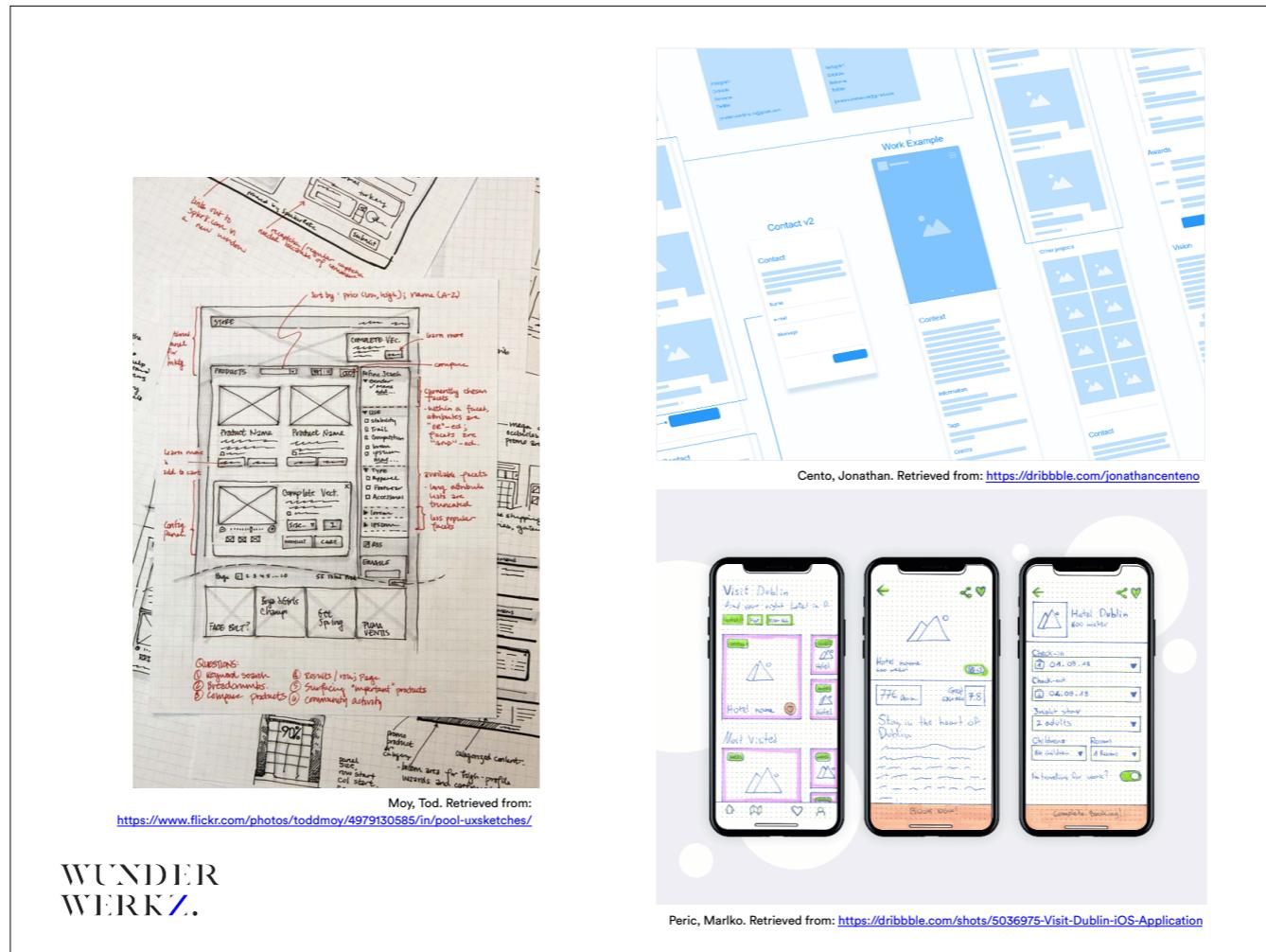
So before you design create a blueprint for your design, i.e., wireframes, sketches, even a sitemap is better than nothing

Sketch it up

/ The importance of the wireframe

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Wireframes and sketches are a good ideas so you don't get down the path of a design that isn't going to best represent your brand. Beyond being cheaper to fix a sketch than a fully design product, it's also much easier to fix these



Beyond this, it's easy to get distracted by images, colors, fonts and text if you dive into web building before you have a strategy in place. This is the opportunity for you to focus on the content, features and user flow of the site without getting distracted by the things that make it pretty. This step is about the substance.

You do not have to be a designer to create a wireframe. While I create wireframes and sketches I use illustrator or sketch but you can literally just grab some graph paper and start drawing out squares for where your content will live.

Wireframe checklist

- + Placement of elements
- + Design for user experience
- + Navigation - Less is more
- + Site features
- + Does it fulfill purpose/mission?

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When creating wireframes make sure you thinking about the following aspects of the design.

1. Think about where content is going to live and why and content hierarchy. What information is most important, what comes first?
2. Design for your user's experience. Think about how users are going to get to that content and any specific conversion areas that may exist in the design. Why do those live where they do?

3. Avoid choice paralysis, by having less options. The greater number of choices you offer someone the harder it is for them to make a decision.
How many of you are familiar with the jam study? Okay this was an experiment conducted at a local grocery store where consumers were presented with 24 jams to sample on one day, and 6 jams on the following day. The larger display on day one attracted 60% of shoppers, but only 3% of those people made a purchase. The smaller display of 6 jams on the second day attracted 40% of shoppers, but 30% of them made a purchase.
By limiting choices, conversions were ten times higher. This same concept can be applied to your website instead of showing them everything up front help guide the user to where you want them to be with calls to action.
4. Think about special features you'll need. Things like "modals" or "filtering", how will content benefit from these features
5. And finally make sure you're staying in line with your project mission statement, does each design decision serve a purpose and help fulfill your project's goal

Make it Pretty

/ Throw some paint on the walls

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Time to make it pretty. In a typical design process this is the phase in which I would create mockups that show how the site is going to look once it's built. However if you aren't a designer or developer you can still do things to help make your site better even if you're using a template.

But before you start down either path you'll want to just make sure you've got everything you'll need for design success.

Make sure your horse is still in front of your cart

- + Do you have a mission statement?**
- + Do you have sketches and/or wireframes?**
- + Do you have a brandguide?**
- + Do you have a budget?**

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Don't forget what got you here.

1. Do you have a good/focused understanding of the projects goals, users and requirements?
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2. Do you have a good blueprint from which to design from?
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3. This is one that we haven't talked about yet but do you have a brandguide or any existing brand assets necessary for designing? At Wunder Werkz we make sure every client has a brand asset guideline that the web design can adhere to so you aren't having to make brand design decision while trying to design the website. One should come before the other. Brand guides streamlines process so only web based decisions are being made during the web process, not brand decisions
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4. Do you have budget? Based on everything you know right now do you have the appropriate budget to fulfill the project goals?

Design checklist

- + Minimize text
- + Show don't tell
- + Use negative space
- + Use contrasting colors to help organize and create hierarchy
- + Limit animations (this includes sliders and carousels)
- + Be consistent with your brand

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Whether turning your wireframes into mockups or picking a template for your site this final step will allow you to really flesh out the design.

Some things to think about when designing

1. Minimize text. Unless I'm reading a blog post or news article I don't want to be inundated with a wall of text. Learn to tell your story in a few sentences not a few paragraphs.
2. Break up swaths of copy with images and when the images do the job of the description cut the description all together.
3. Use negative space. People know how to scroll so please don't cram all of your content "above the fold". Let things breathe by leaving room between titles and bodies of copy, paragraphs and calls to action.
4. Use colors to create organization and visual hierarchy. You can use colors to make calls to action clear and obvious and draw the users eyes to where you want it to go.
5. Limit the movement on your site. A little movement can be engaging and fun. Too much movement is a migraine and also lacks focus.
6. Don't forget to reinforce decisions by thinking about why and how design here further fulfills the purpose and mission and follow your own brand guidelines.

Be Your User

- + Why is my user here and how did they get here?
- + How does my user feel when navigating my site?
- + Is my site easy to use?
- + Is it clear what my business does? Am I clearly conveying to users how I can help them?
- + Does my site make it easy to get in touch with me or request my services or make a sale?

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Another thing you want to do when designing your site is keep your user in mind. Design for User Experience by putting yourself in the shoes of your user. Ask yourself the following questions:

- + Why is my user here and how did they get here? Did they google me, where did I show up in a google search, did they find me from another site.
- + How does my user feel when navigating my site? Can they easily find what they are looking for, are there too many options, are choices worded in a way that's clear
- + Is my site easy to use? Not only does it load, is it functional are things working as expected, is content clear and concise, is the path to conversion clear
- + Is it clear what my business does? Am I clearly conveying to users how I can help them? This is not the time to be vague or rambling. Be clear and concise in you messaging.
- + Does my site make it easy to get in touch with me or request my services or make a sale? The site is useless if the user can't complete the conversion action, whether that is get in touch, visit us, or buy this item, the desired action should not only be easy to find it should be mindless.

Don't forget

- + Mobile
- + Other devices
- + Other Web Browsers
- + Users location

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Also don't forget when testing your site to look at it on mobile and other devices. Check it in multiple browsers, sites can and do look different if you view them in safari, chrome, firefox or internet explorer.

Make sure your site is being hosted somewhere near where the user is seeing it. If your users are in China and your servers are in the US how long does it take for your content to load.



2003. Retrieved from:
<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iraq/3447776/Bush-Regrets-Mission-Accomplished-Banner.html>

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And that's it! You followed all the steps and have a beautifully designed website. You did it! Mission Accomplished.....

But maybe not

/ When bad design still happens

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But maybe not. You've done all the steps and done your due diligence and made a beautiful web presence but something still isn't working, your website still isn't converting. But how do you know how/why? Don't dispair!

Your arsenal

- + Accessibility Testing
- + Performance Testing
- + User Testing
- + Analytics

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There are tools out there that can help you pinpoint what in your web design isn't working and even give you tips on how to fix them.

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Things like Accessibility Testing, Performance Testing, User Testing and Analytics can give you the insight into where improvements can be made.

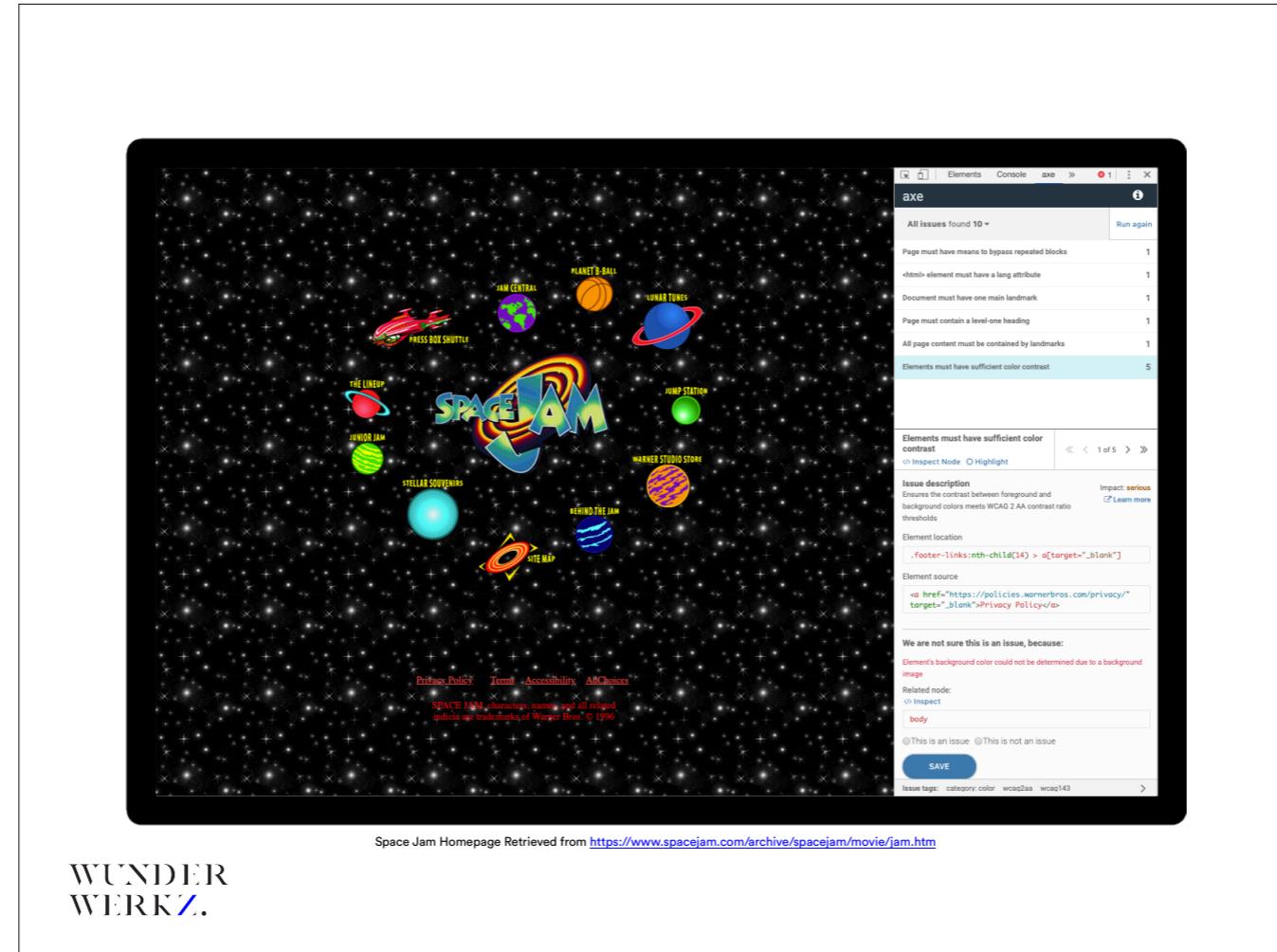
Accessibility

/ If people can't use it, it doesn't matter if you like it

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One time I had a client that had a brand guide built for print that used really low contrast text color on a colored background. For print it was fine, but on the web it was unreadable and frankly it was making my eyes bleed. However the client wasn't seeing what I was. So to prove my point I ran an accessibility test on the web page to show that indeed the color contrast would make the page inaccessible to users with poor vision or colorblindness, case closed.

But beyond being a tool to reinforce my design decisions accessibility testing is important for other reasons. The Americans with Disabilities Act tells us that all public spaces should be accessible to persons with disabilities, including some digital spaces. You could face a lawsuit if a person with a disability claims they cannot access your website. You might endure legal fees, a possible settlement, a potential public relations problem, and the cost of rebuilding your website so that it complies with the ADA. I actually know a person who owns a chain of restaurants in Los Angeles that is currently facing a legal battle because his website was not accessible to people with disabilities.



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I went ahead and ran an accessibility report on the Space Jam website (the Michael Jordan Space Jam kids). And I used Axe, which is an accessibility tool you can download as a plugin and will show up in your dev tools. You can see that it calls out the contrast between this footer text and the background as being a “serious” readability issue.

Running a tool like axe on your site will tell you if you have accessibility errors that may be causing problems for users with disabilities or frankly users in general.

Accessibility Tools

- + aXe :: Developer-centric tool, available for free as extension for Firefox and Chrome.
- + WAVE (Website Accessibility Evaluation Tool) :: Several tools available: enter a URL on their homepages, available as browser extension or use their API
- + tota11y :: Available as a bookmarklet that can be used in any web browser

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There are tons of other accessibility testing tools out there, I always recommend doing your research to find what works best for you, but here are a few

aXe :: aXe is a free extension available in Firefox and Chrome that shows up as a tab in your dev tools. When you have the tool open you can analyze a web page which will give you a list of accessibility issues and how many times they occurred on the page.

WAVE :: A suite of products most of which are free, maintained by WebAIM an organization whose mission is to help people make their web content accessible to those with disabilities. You can check accessibility by entering a url on their site , using their browser extension.

tota11y :: Built by developers at the Khan academy it's available as a bookmarklet and can be used in any web browser. When you're on the webpage you want to test you just click the bookmark and the tota11y widget appears on the screen.

All three highlight errors, give you clues about what is causing them and how to remedy them.

Performance

/ Best practices in practice

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Knowing how your site performs across devices, platforms and places is important in understanding where and how users might be facing issues. Your site may look great on your desktop and your phone, but what about the person sitting across the room?

Live Demo Time!

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Now I'm going to demo one of my most favorite tools of all time. Dev Tools. Dev tools are available in Chrome, Safari and Firefox but I'm going to use Chrome's for today's demo. As a developer I use dev tools for a lot for a lot of things, but today I'm going to show you a quick trick to seeing how your site looks on different devices. So first I need a website.

Performance Tools

- + Dev Tools :: See what your site looks like on different devices.
- + Speed Tests by Uptrends :: See how long it takes to load your site from different locations.
- + Geekflare Website Audit :: Tests across 40 metrics for performance best practice.

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There are some great tools out there that can perform audits of your site to give you a top level look at places you could make improvements

1. There's dev tools which we just saw. In addition to a bunch of other amazing stuff it can also show you how your site looks on different devices
2. Speed Tests by Uptrends let's you test a site from different locations around the world to see how it loads. So you type in your url and choose from a list of locations around the world and it will tell you how your site performs from that location. It will also give you suggestions for improving performance.
3. Geekflare Website Audit will test your site for over 40 metrics in performance and best practices it also gives you suggestions on where and how to improve performance and usability of your site

User testing

/ What are your users saying

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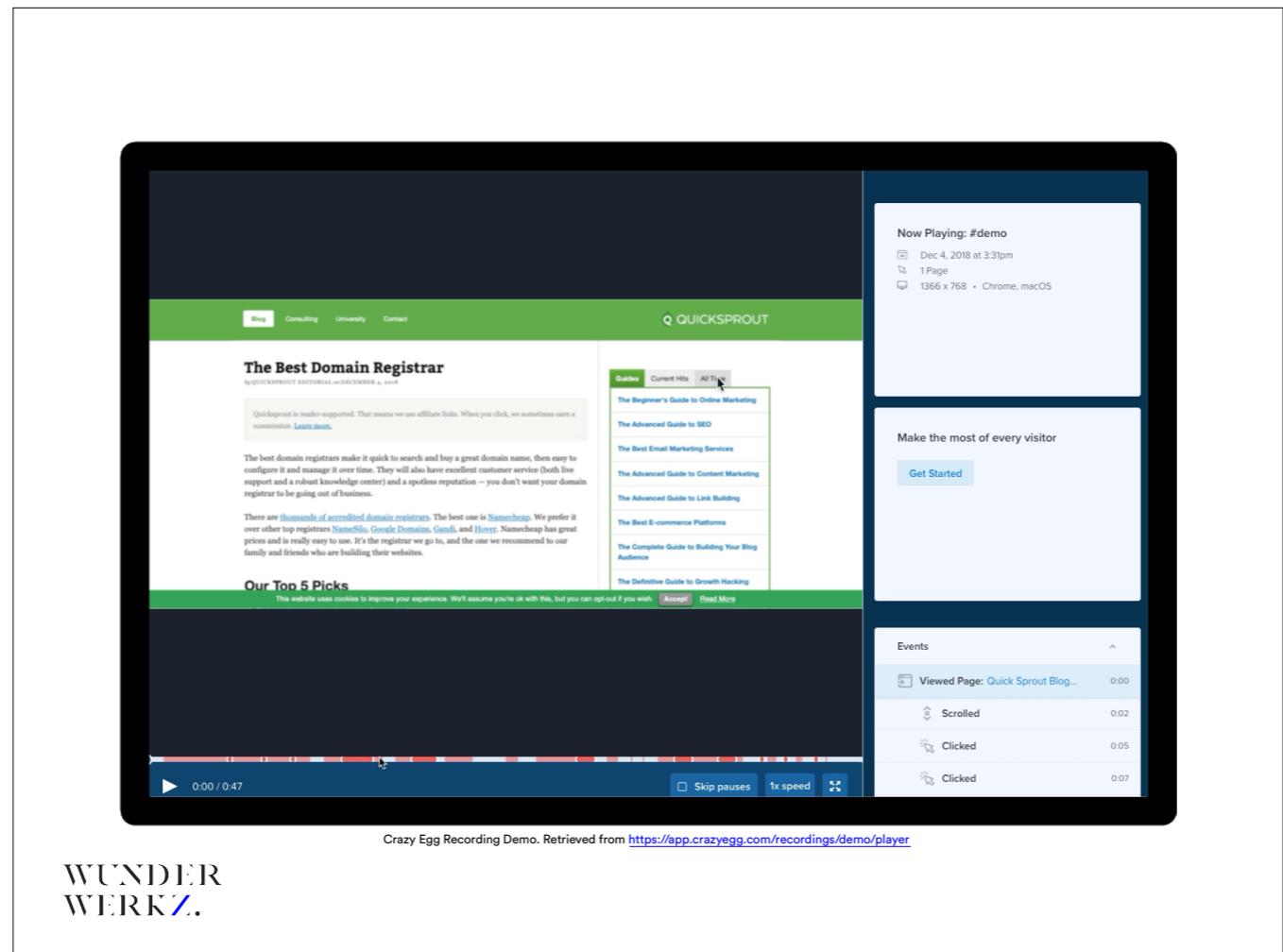
You think your site looks great, but what do your users think. It's time to do some user testing. There are tons of services out there that will let you pick users from your target audience to test your designs often at any phase in the process.

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Remember you are not your user, but your significant other and friends probably aren't either. When doing user testing make sure you are testing people who are the most representative of your actual users and try to find people you don't know to get the most unbiased results.

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Usability testing comes in all shapes and sizes and how you test will depend on what answers you are looking for. To determine a users preference you may want to run a/b testing, but to see how a user is interacting with a site you may want to take a recording.



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This is a demo recording from Crazy Egg of a customer using a site. Recordings can show the path users are following to get to information and highlight where they may be getting caught up.

User Testing Tools

- + Optimizely :: A/B testing for targeted audiences. Basic free option.
- + Crazy Egg :: Click-based user tool with insights on scrolling, clicks, search terms, visitor sources and A/B testing. \$9/mo.
- + UsabilityHub:: Get heatmaps, first impressions, user preferences and navigational tests. Basic free option.

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Just like accessibility and performance tools, there are tons of tools out there and these are just a few

Optimizely :: They tout themselves as the worlds most powerful A/B testing product and there are tons of features including, cross-browser testing, geotargeting, visitor segmentation and multivariate testing. There's a basic free plan.

Crazy Egg :: A website optimization tool that uses click-based user experience to gives you a Heatmap, Scrollmap, Confetti and Overlay of your web pages in addition to things like user recordings, a/b testing and more.

UsabilityHub :: Offers five different test suites to enable you to capture and analyze users' preferences. You can run first click tests, design surveys, preference tests and five second tests. There is a basic free option.

Analytics

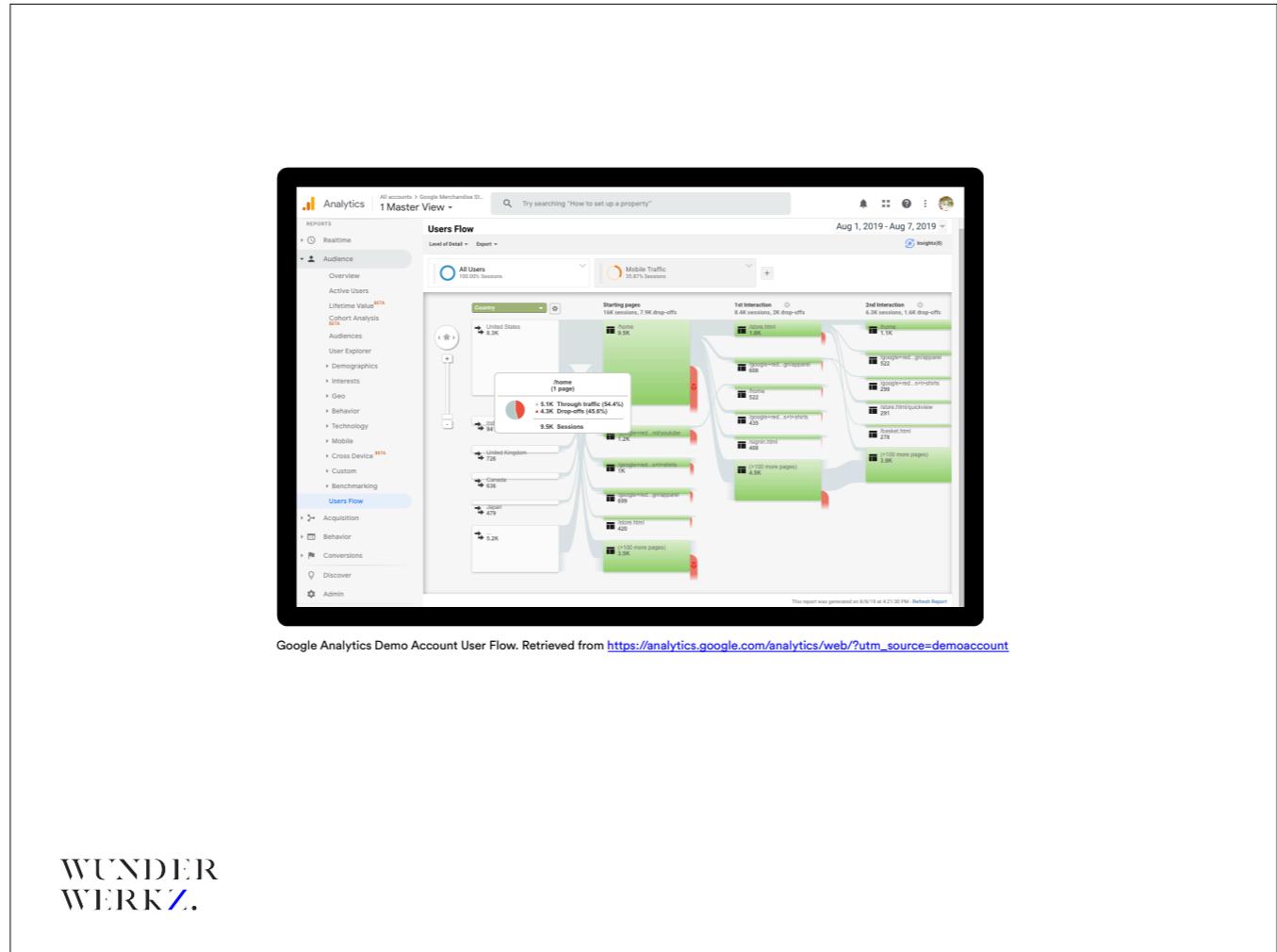
/ That's a fact Jack

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Adding analytics to a site will help you determine what is working and (prove) what isn't working.

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Analytics can be used to test for a whole slew of things but at a base level can help you determine what users are and aren't doing on your site, where users are coming from, how long users are engaging, and help you improve the conversion of users



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Here's a screenshot of a user flow for mobile traffic on Goolge's demo website. The red shows where drop-offs occurred and could be useful insight to show where users might be getting confused or frustrated - in other words where you may need to make design changes.



“The Ultimate Guide to Google Analytics for UX Designers”

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There's a great article on Medium's UX Collective on how to utilize Google Analytics for design titled, “The ultimate guide to Google analytics for UX designers” which is a good starting point for how to use google analytics for UX.

Analytics Tools

- + Google Analytics :: Simple to set up, customizable, all the basic information you could want. Free for most users.
- + Clicky :: Like GA but lets you see how many users you have, what they're doing and when they are leaving in real time. Basic is free.
- + Crazy Egg and Optimizely.

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Again, there are more out there these are just a few

Google Analytics :: GA is pretty much the go-to analytics tool. It lets you collect data on your audience (age, location, devices) and lets you observe how visitors find, interact with and leave your site. It's free for most users.

Clicky :: Often compared to GA but it does have a few features GA doesn't, like letting you see how many visitors you have, what they are doing, and when they are leaving in real time.

Crazy Egg and Optimizely :: Both of these can also be used for analytics and since I previously listed them I'm not going to talk about them further here.



Okay so hopefully at this point you're feeling good about how to implement best practices in your web presence

 **First impressions are 94% design related.**

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Remember, on the Internet first impressions matter and most of the time they are design related

In Summation

- + Ask the right questions up front
- + Do your research
- + Have a mission statement
- + Create a blueprint
- + Have your tools ready

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In summary here's how you can stop bad web practices before they start

1. Don't put the cart before the horse. Understand the problem by asking the right questions up front
2. Become the expert by doing your research and understanding the project goals
3. Have a guiding light for the project. Create a mission statement that can inform decision making down the line
4. Don't make big leaps, be incremental and create a blueprint and strategy for your design with wireframes, sketches
5. And finally, have your arsenal of tools ready to help you pinpoint what is and isn't working and finesse your web presence down the line

**Thanks for coming.
Any questions?**

/ @wunder_werkz

liz@iheartwunderwerkz.com

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Thanks for coming

Check out wunderwerkz on instagram

You can contact me at liz@iheartwunderwerkz.com

Does anyone have any questions?

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