Session 1 – Identify Content Needs

Information Requirements

Once the strategic intent or goals of the website have been identified, it is possible to determine what information needs to be included in the website. For example if the website is a brochure site, the content is likely to include pictures and details about the products. If it is an e-commerce site, the content may include product information, plus a privacy policy and forms for capturing payment and delivery details.

As part of the process of determining information requirements the Information Architect must ask a number of questions, such as:

- What are the long and short term goals of the site?
- Who are the intended audience?
- What types of interaction needs to occur?

Goals of the Website

Identifying the goals of the website was discussed in the resource Strategic Intent. It may be that the client has both long and short-term goals. Distinguishing between these is important, because a "phased development" may be appropriate. In a phased development, the website development occurs in phases or stages. The first stage addresses the short-term goals and then, when feasible, the second (or subsequent) stages would address the longer term goals. The example below describes a phased approach.

Example: Phased approach

A client has approached a web development company, to request they develop an e-commerce site. After lengthy discussions with the client, it becomes clear that the client has a number of goals, but also a limited budget. Some of the goals identified include:

- Reaching a broader market
- Advertising and showcasing products
- Providing information about the company and products 24 hours a day
- Allowing customers to browse, order and pay for products online

It is agreed that the best approach for this client is a phased approach. In phase one, a brochure site will be developed. This can be achieved within budget. The brochure site will be monitored to see how much extra business is created by a web presence. If the brochure site is successful, then the second phase can begin when the budget permits.

Develop Website Information Architecture

Web Development Team

Target Audience

When designing a website it is important to consider the target audience. Different audiences will have different information requirements. The target audience are the people who use or visit the website. Two examples are provided below to illustrate how the target audience affects information design.

Example: B2B audience

A business to business site allows a retailer to order products from a wholesaler. In this example the audience is the retailer. Let us assume the retailer has an established business relationship with the wholesaler and they are familiar with the product range. In this example, the purpose of the website and the target audience would suggest a design which promoted data entry - perhaps a form-based design. The information requirements for this audience would include: product availability; pricing etc. Including a large number of graphics and promotional material, would slow download times, without obvious advantage to the target audience.


Example: B2C audience

In this example we have a business to consumer site selling garden ornaments. The audience is the consuming public. The information required is likely to include: pricing information; graphics showcasing products; information about the company etc. This site needs to be more customer focussed and designed to create and hold the customer's interest.


The website below provides an example of a design which reflects the target audience. It is https://www.primaveragallery.co.uk/collections/sculpture. The graphics provide a central focus, which is integral to the purpose of the website. The fact that the graphics will slow download times is less important than the showcasing of the art work.

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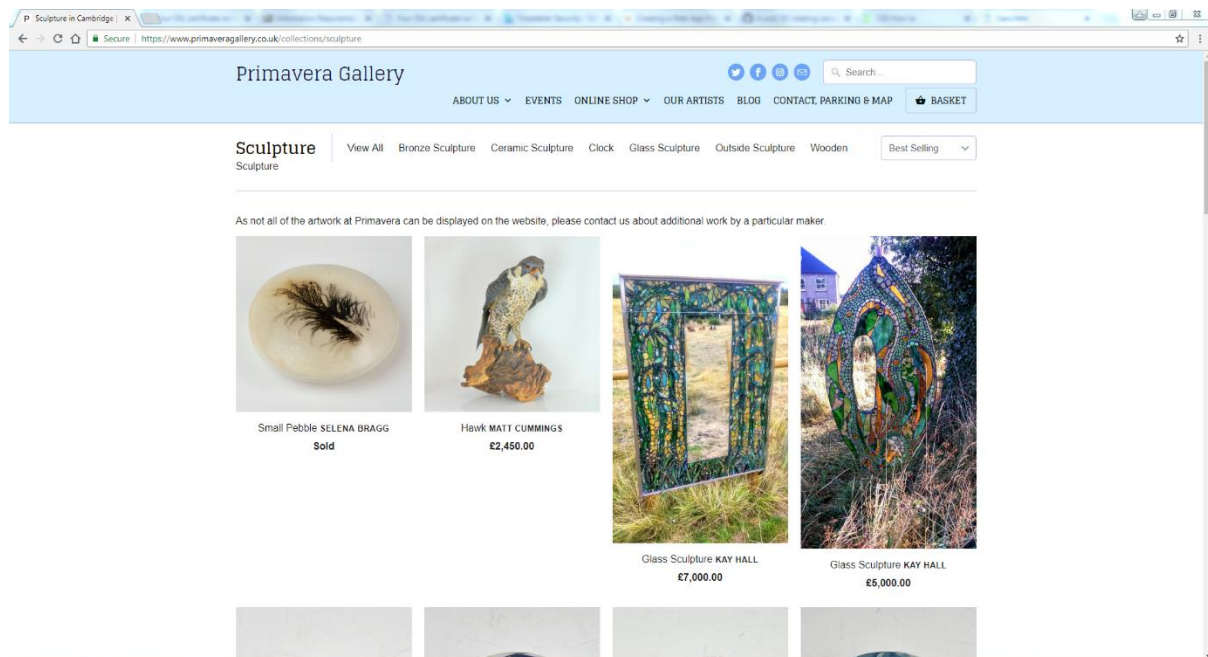
Contrast the previous website with the one shown below
- https://services.dhhs.vic.gov.au/. This website provides a range of information on "health services" and the content structure has been designed accordingly. The design facilitates navigation through the information categories.
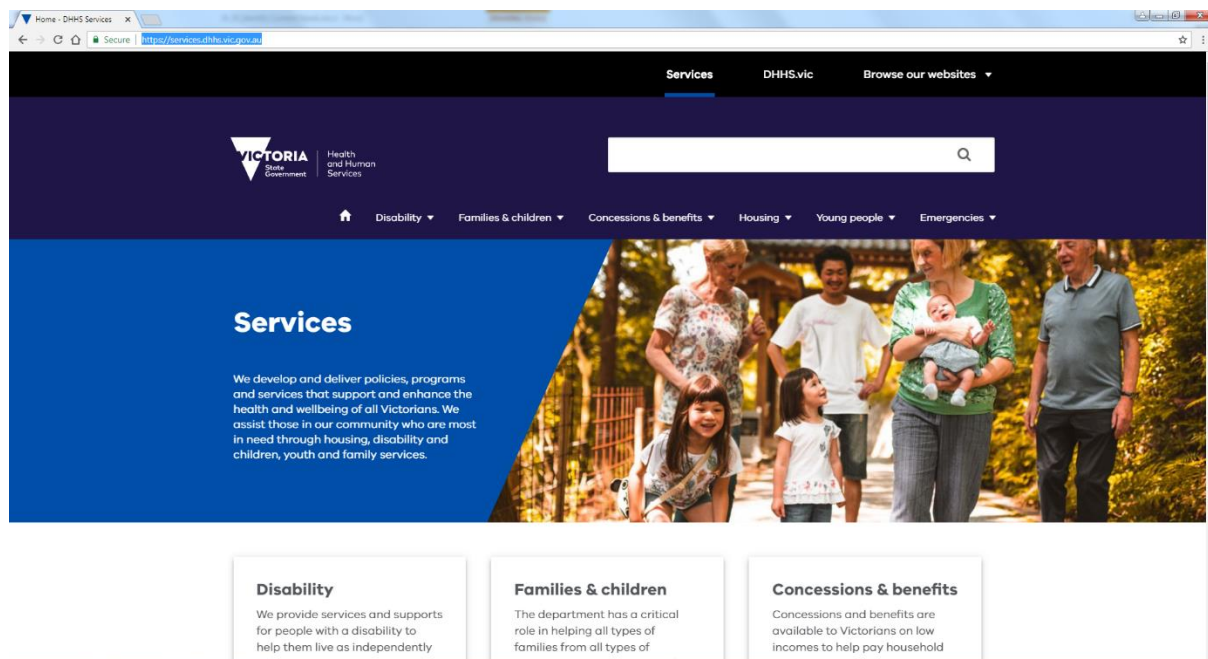
Website Interaction

The types of interactions occurring on a website also has an impact on how information is presented. Two examples are presented below each with differing types of interaction and therefore different information requirements. The first example presents a scenario for a business to consumer website, the second is a business to business scenario.

Example: A scenario for a business to consumer website interaction

A retail customer wishes to purchase a DVD player. They don't know much about DVD players, so they want to read about the different models, what features are available and get a comparison of prices. They may need to:

- Search for information on a product category
- See a graphic of the different models and a list of features
- See a comparative price list and perhaps a consumer review of the different models
- Select a product for purchase
- Continue browsing
- Purchase the product

Example: A scenario for a business to business website interaction

A retailer needs to re-order a specific product line. They may need to:

- Login to the website
- Choose the option to see a listing of regularly ordered products
- Use the list to re-order
- Submit the order and be automatically billed for the purchase

In the first example, the interaction is much more unpredictable, the website user requires a lot of information and choice about how they browse and interact with the site. In the second example the priority is to automate the process and provide a minimum of information and screen clutter.