

Jake Sinclair's Personal Website Design Justification

Personal websites can be a great tool when looking to demonstrate skillsets, list schooling/work experience, and highlight awards or accomplishments. In my own project, I implemented all these things, but I did not want to create the website in a way that demonstrates these things as a one-time showing, or a “complete” project. I built my website based on longevity and being able to update it, as various information within the site changes. I also wanted to create a website that is user-friendly and easy to navigate without having to dig for information, to ensure that I will not create a tough time for people visiting my site.

A major focus of mine when building my personal website was creating a solid, consistent navigation system, to help users avoid getting lost within the site. As Dr. Fee (My Web Design and Development professor) said in his ‘page and site design’ lecture, “the worst thing ever is getting lost in a hypertext environment.” Because of this I put a lot of effort into making my navigation easily accessible. To do this, I first made sure that everything within the website was within 1 to 2 clicks away. Steve Krug in his book on web usability, “Don’t Make me Think,” and in his first ‘Law of Usability,’ also titled “Don’t Make me Think,” states that nothing important should ever be more than two clicks away, so I closely adhered to that principle and kept it consistent throughout the design process of the website navigation. My next goal in creating the navigation was making sure that the user knows where they are always. Krug states “people won’t use your web site if they can’t find their way around it,” so I made sure to use “persistent navigation” as Krug calls it. Meaning, I created a set of navigation elements that appear on every page of my website, those being my navigation bar which includes all the pages in the site, and my aside navigation which holds my email addresses and my LinkedIn profile. In addition, I made it clear to the user which page they are currently on, by highlighting the current page in the navigation bar, using a black background and a light-blue color on the link to contrast the other links. I also included a heading that states the name of the current page in top left of the “main content” section on each page and is the biggest heading on all the pages. Lastly to adhere to the persistent navigation, I made sure there was always a link to the home page. Both Dr. Fee and

Steve Krug stressed that there should ALWAYS be a link to home, so I ensured that this was included in my site, within the navigation bar.

Visual Hierarchies were another big focus of mine when building my personal website. I adhered to Krug's three traits of visual hierarchies when defining the sections of my page. The first trait was, "the more important something is, the more prominent it is. Following this principle, I made the most important elements in the site the most prominent as well. For example, the biggest heading I made was the one of my name in the top left of the header, as it is the main identifier to the user of my website. After this, the next biggest headings were the title headings of each individual page ("About Me" and "Running" for example) and then subheadings following them to represent different sections of the page. Krug's next trait was, "things that are related logically are related visually." To follow this, I made sure to make "an impossible-to miss distinction," between my headers and the text following them by making a small space between each header and its associated text, and a much bigger space between the text of a specific header and the next header following it. For example, on the "About Me" page of my site, the text associated with the "W&J Cross Country / Track & Field" header is much closer to that header, than the header titled "Alpha Tau Omega Fraternity." To further enforce the visual relation trait, I included images that were related to specific sections of the site and made sure they adhered to the same principles. The last of Krug's traits was, "things are 'nested' visually to show what's part of what," which I included in my design with adhering to visual relation.

Lastly, within the main content and text of my website I design a lot of it, based upon what Krug says is his "FACT OF LIFE #1", that being "we don't read pages. We scan them." I made sure to use a lot of visual cues within my site and made it obvious what was clickable. For example, when I included important words such in the text, such as organizations that I am a part of, I styled them so that they were colored in complimentary colors and when these words had links attached, I added a hover style so that their color would get much lighter with a cursor over them to indicate that it's a link. I also made it obvious that the links in my navigation systems (the navbar and the aside) are clickable by adding a black background and changing the color of the word from white to light blue when a cursor hovers over them. The last thing I did to adhere to Krug "FACT OF

LIFE,” was limiting the amount of text I used on my site. Krug says, “Get rid of half the words on each page, then get rid of half of what’s left.” While I didn’t fully adhere to this, because I needed enough text to accurately portray myself in a personal website, I did get rid of around half of the text that I originally had, to make it easier for users to scan my website.