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Final Project Write Up

As my final project for the Web Design course at The Iron Yard I redesigned TD Bank’s Accounts section of their website. On the original site, after a user logs in with his or her own unique username and password, they encounter a folder-like system that carries them through the different sections of this side of their site. These sections are: Accounts, Transfers, Bill Pay, Person-to-Person Payments, Alerts, Products, Customer Service. There are also some recurring elements that persist throughout all of the pages: a Message Center, a Help & Related Task, Services & New Products. I sought to redesign this system for the TD commercial banking clients.

First, I heavily researched the Canadian roots of TD Bank as well as its history on how their business has matured throughout the decades following its birth in 1955. TD Bank proudly embraces the color green as a motif for wealth, growth and nature. However, their site as it stands fails to fully expressing such ideals, and the most egregious example of this failure is coloring a variety of buttons on the site with red despite this color’s associations with danger, threats and errors. Furthermore, the site incorporates quite a lot of unnecessary content through banners and floating sections that merely detracts from the user experience. The philosophical premise of the redesign I sought to do was eliminating this flaw by incorporating accentuated hierarchy in the systems the site operates on while simultaneously engaging white space as the vehicle to harmonize the user’s psychological response with the user experience.

The next step was sketching. I opted for paper prototypes because they lend themselves to a better system and modular driven design. Most of the emphasis was placed up on layout and its white space as well as hierarchy, specifically in the context of the proportions between the sizes of different content.

After the sketching was completed, I explored a more formal outline of the top three re-design ideas through Photoshop wireframe. Photoshop lends itself to the production of not only wireframes that more closely resemble the design output in a browser, but also of material that can be readily incorporated in a developer’s workflow.

Simultaneously, I used Illustrator to build three style tiles. The style tiles included potential color combinations, typographic arrangements, as well as navigation and buttons styles. This part of the process incorporated most of the research I had done on TD Bank, which is why I opted to sticking to the color green because of the considerable amount of brand equity TD Bank possesses in this color scheme. Typography on the other hand was much more open to reinterpretation, which is why I explored new and more modern typefaces.

Subsequently, I merged the concepts of the top style tile with the top wireframe by incorporating the Illustrator styling into the Photoshop wireframe. This composition gave me a starting point for an approximation on the visual objective of the redesign. I ended up deviating in many ways from the composition, but I still retained the fundamental system and styling concepts.

I began coding the design by rolling out all the HTML content first. This process gave me a clear idea on just how much styling work had to be done. Fortunately most of the copy was already reusable in the redesign, which gave me more time to reverse engineer the system TD Bank uses for their client section of the commercial banking side of their site. I used Sass with Bourbon for the styling, and Github for version control.

First, I developed the Sass mixins and variables that would be implemented repeatedly across the design. This organizational structure promoted consistency within the styling of elements that held similar functions and purposes. I also set up basic font-size variables for different elements so that the typeface would be more or less proportionally consistent across different screen sizes.

Second, I organized my Sass both in an object-oriented and mobile-first approach by respectively diving the code into sections based on the function, not position, of the elements in the site and by coding the global version of the site first, and using media queries to alter the code just enough to create a consistent layout across all screen sizes.

Lastly, I wrote a lot of jQuery-dependent JavaScript to create effects across the different pages of the site. This was done to improve the user experience by engaging the user through an interactive system that responds to user input as opposed to the mainly passive system TD Bank deploys in the status quo.

Overall, most the work was done in purifying the original design of unnecessary content in order to construct a user experience that positively connects with the user’s need for clarity and consistency. Because a user’s savings are on the line, the design had to be straightforward, clear, and consistent in order to minimize the stress potentially involved with the function of the site.