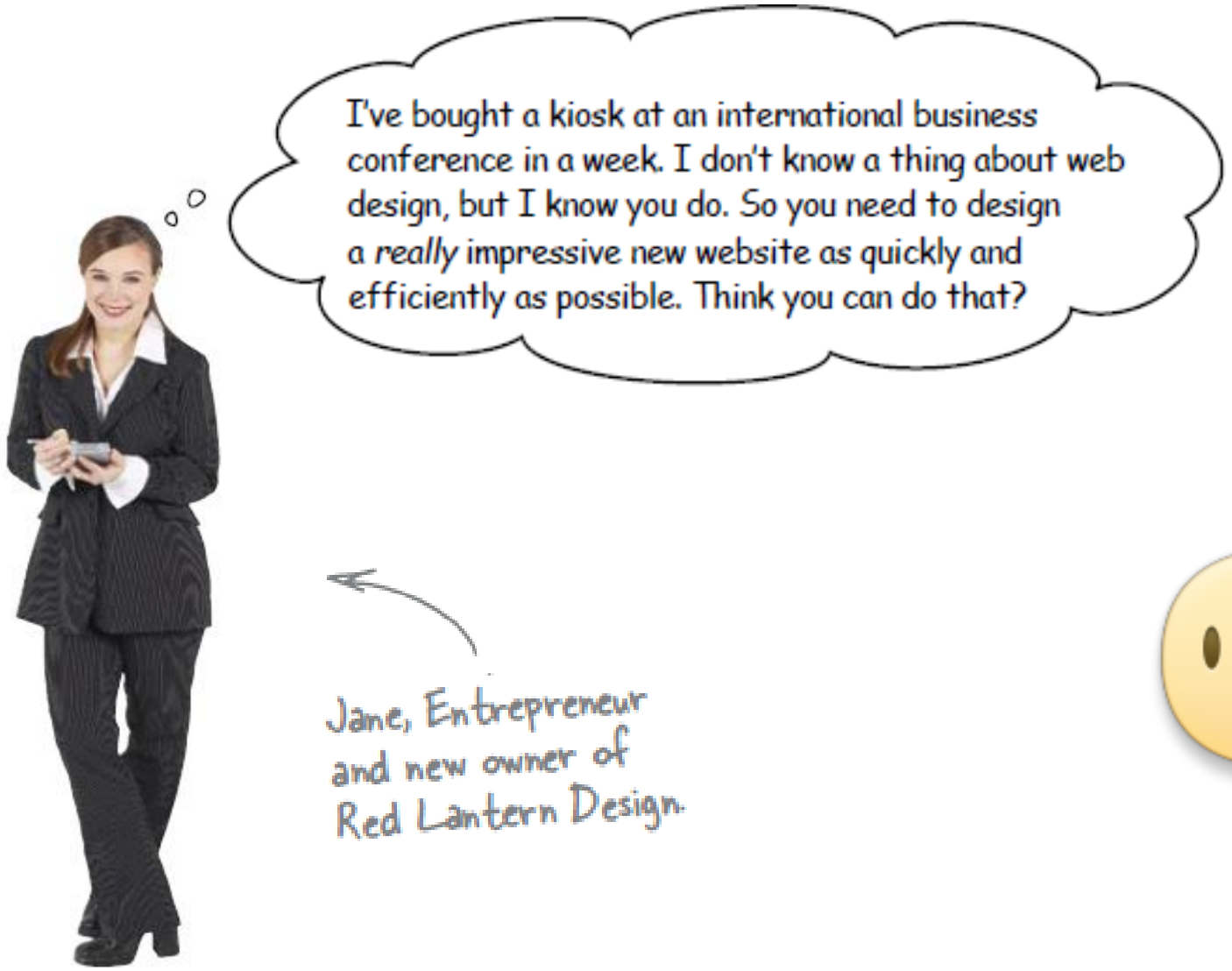
Building Beautiful Web Pages

Capitolo 1

Chapter 1

Look: It's time to work!



«The Red Lantern Design» Web Page

Jane loves Japanese culture. That's why she bought the company. She loved the name.

The logo's cool – but doesn't feel connected to the layout.

There's lots of wasted space at the top of the page before we get to the menu and content.

There's not much contrast between the menu and the background image, or the body text and the gray center column.

Shouldn't there be something to grab potential clients' interest on the front page? Like news or a featured project...

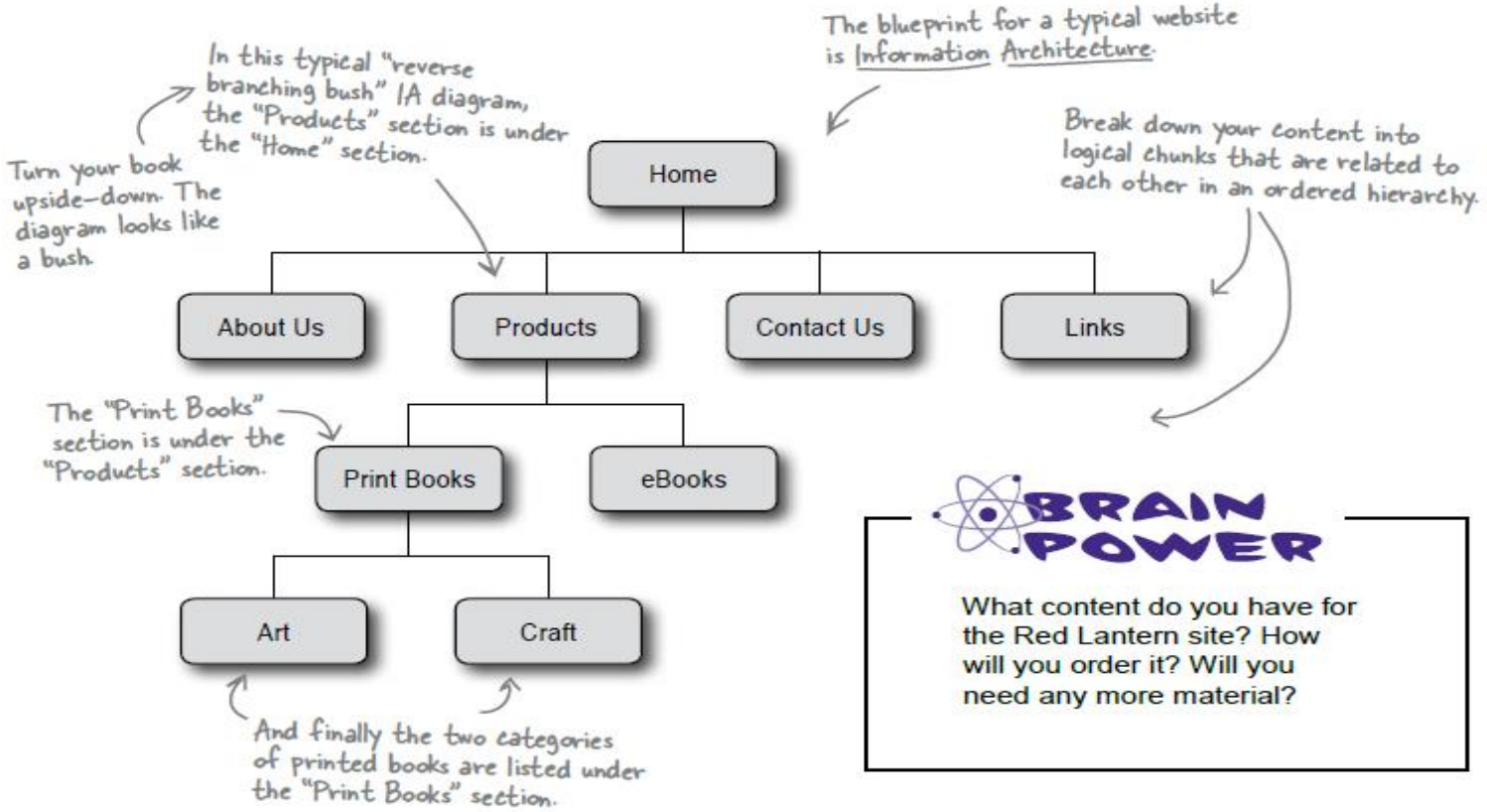
This isn't a very inspiring photo. A gray temple with a gray mountain behind it... Very Zen, but it doesn't exactly say "This company is a young, dynamic, exciting web design trailblazer."

One column? That's it? Seems pretty bland for a web design studio's site!

Where do you start?

Blueprint (Progetto) ⟹ Information Architecture (I.A.)

L’ Information Architecture è un processo mediante il quale si «rompe» il contenuto del tuo sito web in blocchi e poi riorganizza questi pezzi gerarchicamente in relazione logica l'uno all'altro)



BRAIN POWER

What content do you have for the Red Lantern site? How will you order it? Will you need any more material?

Memo from Jane help us!

Red Lantern Design

MEMO

From: Jane

Subject: Site content

Let's have a section of the site where we put news items and updates about Red Lantern.

We definitely need a section of the site where we can show off all of the awesome work we're going to do.

The site needs a contact page. How would we ever get clients without a contact page?!

I think it would be good to have a section of the site about the company--what we do...that kind of thing.

We need to make sure they know we do consulting and web design!

News & Updates

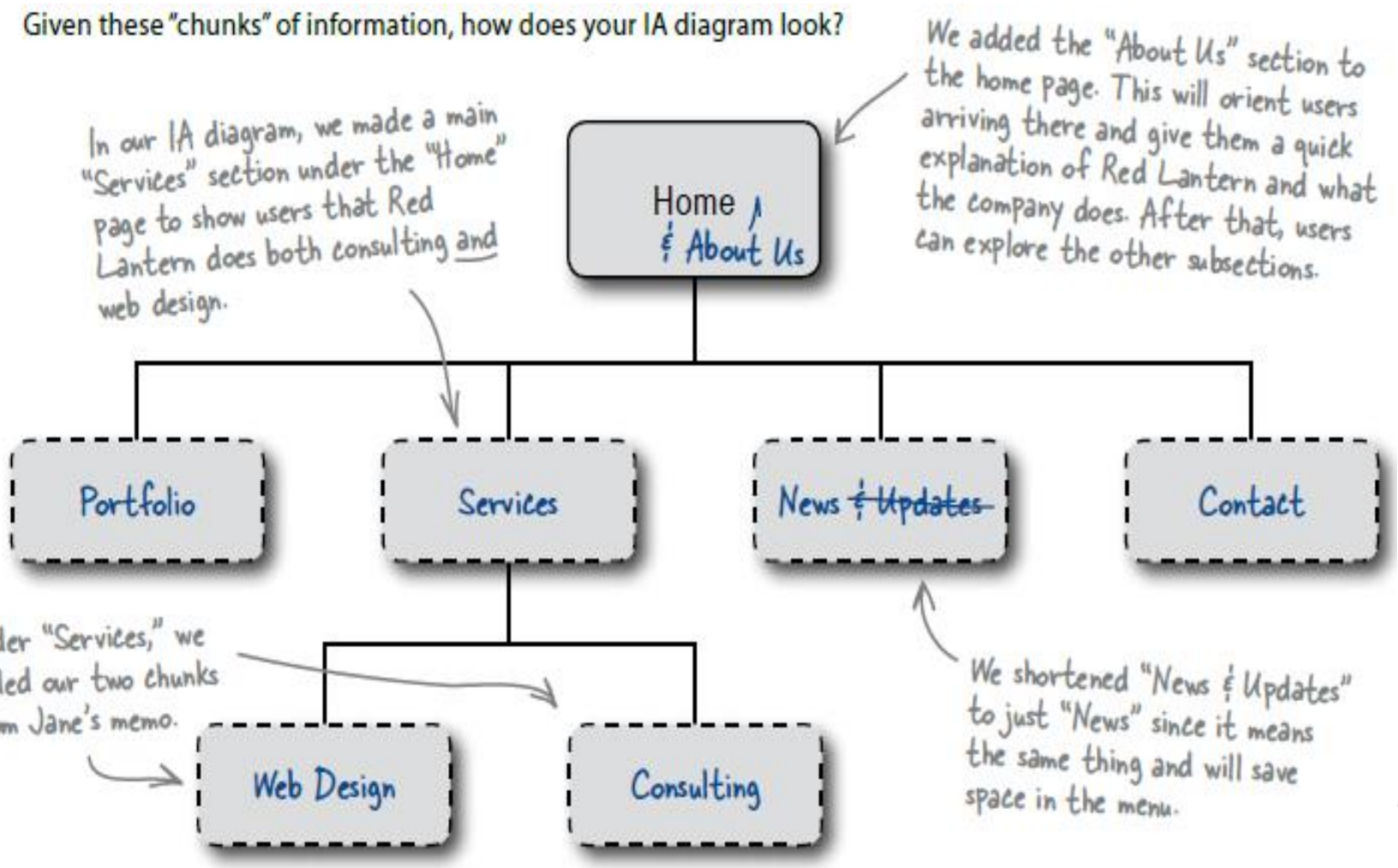
Portfolio

Contact

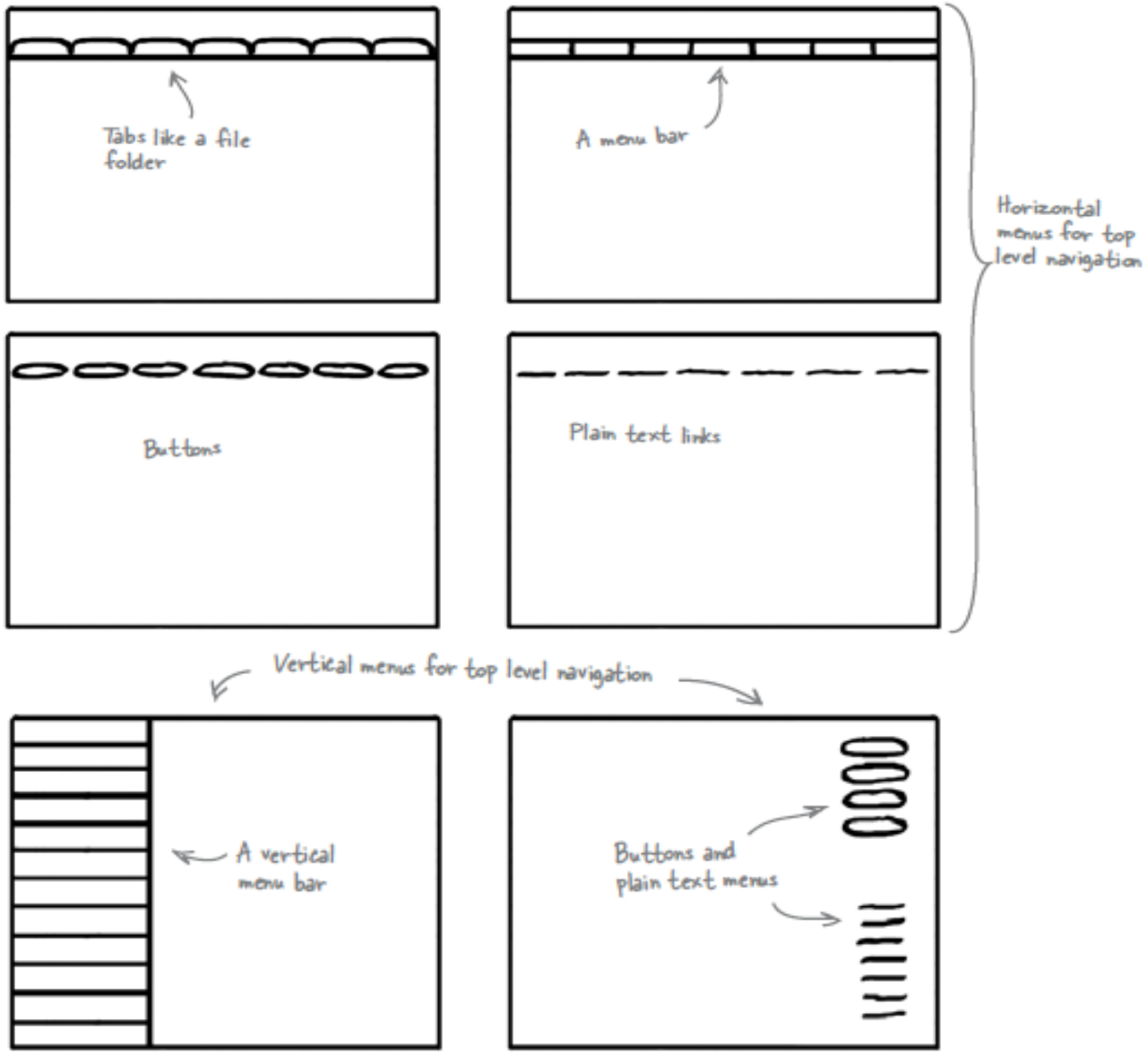
About Us

Consulting, Design

Determine your Information Architecture



Few sketches of the kinds of menu



Examples

Horizontal tabs
Horizontal tabs are used for top level navigation on loads of sites because they save a lot of space.
Expedia
Home
Flights
Hotels
Cars
Vacation Packages
Cruises
Activities
DEALS & OFFERS
Maps
Business Travel
Rewards
Horizontal buttons
Horizontal buttons for top level navigation
In this case, the buttons become visible on mouse over, which is a nice, subtle touch.
Joyent
Home
Products
Services
Developers
Partners
Support
Vertical menu
amazon.com
Shop All Departments
Books
Movies, Music & Games
Digital Downloads
Computers & Office
Electronics
Home & Garden
Grocery, Health & Beauty
Toys, Kids & Baby
Apparel, Shoes & Jewelry
Sports & Outdoors
Tools, Auto & Industrial
Vertical menu for top level navigation.
Back when people first started adding menus to their sites, this was the most popular type of menu.
Vertical tabs
Vertical tabs for top level navigation styled with CSS and images add a real notebook feel to this site.
Notice this site's content is written in French. See appendix I for dealing with multi-language sites.
Guide de Prague
Circuits
Tarifs
Contact
DÉCOUVRIR PRAGUE
PRAGUE - VISITES GUIDÉES

The "Red Lantern" storyboard is finished!

Here's the space for the top level navigation, and we've left a space underneath the main image for important announcements or news items.

No need to add headings or body text at this stage. Lines and blocks are fine as you're looking at the overall design, not the detail, here.

Put the portfolio on the homepage. Potential customers want to see what you can do!

A little bit of color in the storyboard helps to establish the personality of the site.

Now is the code time!

The storyboards look absolutely wonderful. The design and layout for the site look great. But the conference is in two days... Can I see it on screen?

```
/* Red Lantern redesign */

body {
  margin: 0;
  padding: 0;
  background: #7a212
  font-family: Helve
  font-size: 62.5%;
  color: #333;
}

h1, h2, p, ul, li
  margin: 0;
  padding: 0;
}

p {
  font-size: 1.4
  line-height: 1
}

ul {
  list-style-ty
}
```

```
<!DOCTYPE html PUBLIC "-//W3C//DTD XHTML 1.0 Strict//EN"
        "http://www.w3.org/TR/xhtml1/DTD/xhtml1-strict.dtd">
<html xmlns="http://www.w3.org/1999/xhtml" xml:lang="en" lang="en">
<head>
    <title>Red Lantern Design</title>
        <meta http-equiv="Content-Type" content="text/html;
charset=utf-8"/>
        <link rel="stylesheet" href="stylesheets/screen.css" type="text/
css"
media="screen" />
</head>
<body>
    <div id="masthead">
        <h1><img alt="Red Lantern logo" src="images/rl_logo.png" /></h1>
        <ul id="nav">
            <li><a class="active" title="Red Lantern home"
href="index.html">Home</a></li>
            <li><a title="Design services"
href="services.html">Services</a></li>
            <li><a title="Our Work" href="portfolio.html">Portfolio</a></
li>
            <a title="Contact Red Lantern"
            ml">Contact</a></li>


        ">
        eader">
        lt="tokyo buildings" src="images/tokyo.jpg" />
```

Repeat yourself

Remember, you need HTML for every page in your IA diagram. Once you've downloaded it, duplicate the code and name the files accordingly. You'll link them together in the end.

Another memo from Jane: site content!

Red Lantern Design

MEMO

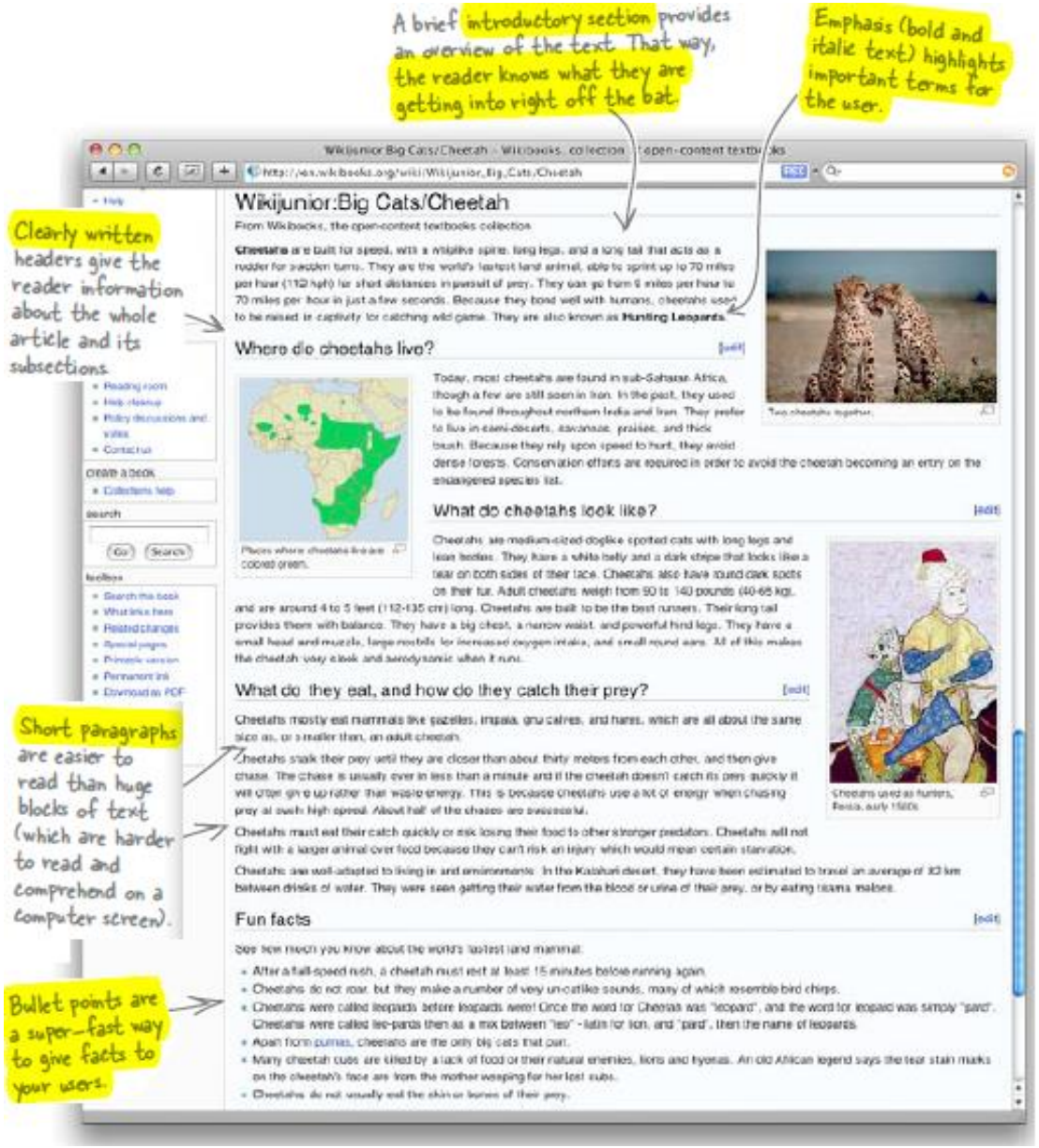
From: Jane

Subject: Site content

People are more conscious of design than ever before. Whatever the service or product, whatever the consumption or value, an intangible context surrounds all interactions. Successful businesses realize that they offer designed experiences, regardless of service or product, and invest the necessary resources to enhance both. People are not only more conscious of design, they are hungry for images, themes and experiences that satisfy them on many levels: aesthetic, pragmatic, ideological, cultural. They are hungry for "good" design. Design is about connecting. Working with our clients, we emphasize a thorough, deeply considerate research process with an emphasis on learning and listening. At the same time, we center the process on audiences and contexts. We design for real people, not demographic targets. We understand that real people are looking for something more and guide our clients, processes and designs in creating greater tangible value for all. Red Lantern designs and builds simple, usable, and attractive websites that are fast, readable, and accessible - all using web standards.

We specialize in: interface design - designing and building web interfaces and templates using web standards; web site redesign - if you are looking to update your site or move it into CSS; markup and css optimization - simplify markup and css to improve speed and make your site more structurally sound; consulting - help with design strategy, css and markup suggestions, and seminars.

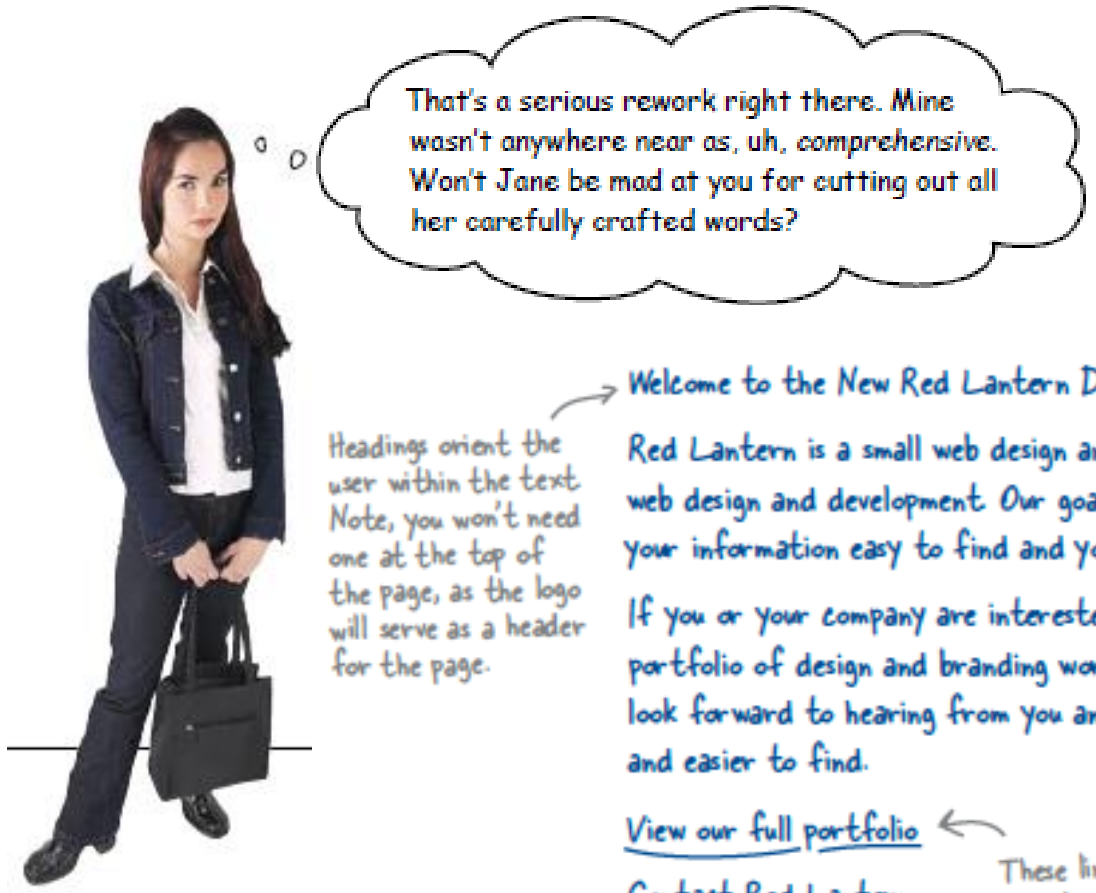
The word of the day is scannability!



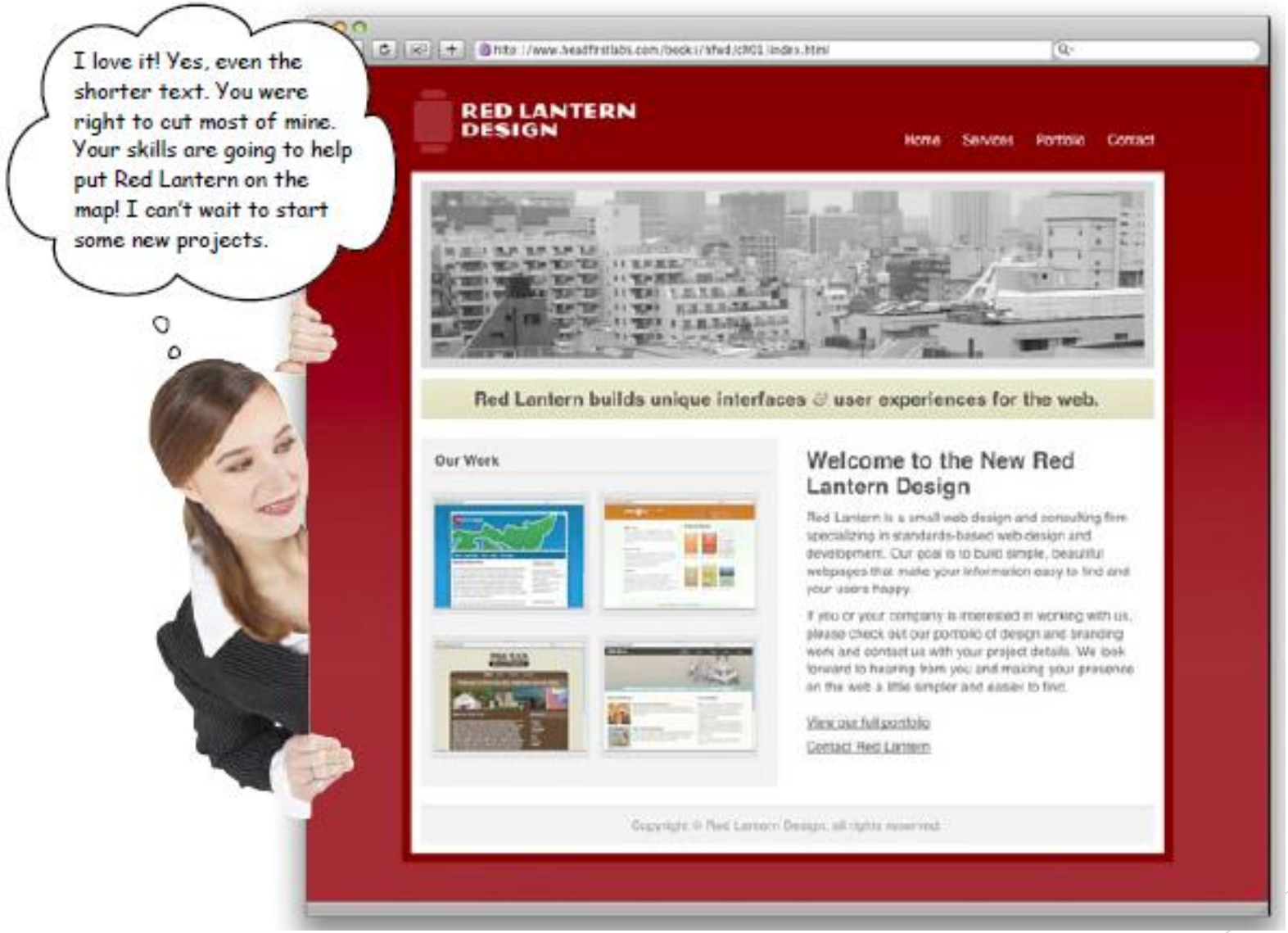
Scannability Checklist

- ☑ Clearly written headers
- ☑ Small(ish) paragraphs
- ☑ Use bold and italics to emphasize important words or phrases.
- ☑ Use lists (ordered or unordered) for appropriate content.

Now the text is more scannable!



It's awesome!


I love it! Yes, even the shorter text. You were right to cut most of mine. Your skills are going to help put Red Lantern on the map! I can't wait to start some new projects.
RED LANTERN DESIGN
Home
Services
Portfolio
Contact
Red Lantern builds unique interfaces & user experiences for the web.
Our Work
Welcome to the New Red Lantern Design

Web design is communication!

When you build a website, you're building it for your users, not for you. You design for your user's strengths and weaknesses. You want to use every technique possible to bring users to your site, help them find what they're looking for, make sure they have a rewarding experience, and keep them coming back.

The process you followed in this chapter

- **Pre-production** using Information Architecture and storyboards to build a blueprint for your site so that you're as efficient and focused as possible when you go digital.
- **Navigation** is based on your IA diagram. It's more than just linking pages together. Navigation helps your users find information.
- **Layout** uses HTML and CSS to build the site's interface (which you already came up with on paper back in the preproduction phase).
- **Writing** "fills" the design up with the scannable content that your visitors come to the site for.

Bullet points

- When you design sites, you should practice user-centered design—creating sites that focus on meeting the needs of your users.
- A design process helps you structure a project so that you stay on task and get things done in an efficient manner.
- Most, if not all, web design projects have 4 components: pre-production, layout, navigation, and writing.
- Information Architecture is the process by which your website's content is broken into chunks and then organized hierarchically in relation to one another.
- Developing your site's IA is a two step process: organizing your site's information, and building an IA diagram.
- An IA diagram visually represents the hierarchical organization of sections and subsections of information in your site.
- Top level navigation usually links to those sections in your information architecture one tier below your home/main page.
- The design of your top level navigation depends on the overall design and layout.
- There are a handful of great models for designing top level navigation: horizontal tabs, horizontal buttons, vertical menu, vertical tabs.
- Storyboards are used to visualize your design and test basic layout concepts before you jump into code.
- Storyboards are a great way to catch potential design problems before you spend time coding your site.
- Writing for the web is different than writing for print.
- Web users scan webpages instead of reading them from beginning to end.
- Web content needs to be written so that it's scannable.

That's all folks!

</Chapter 1>