college **CDI**

Layout fundamentals for websites (NMW)

Class 01

The basics of page layout

What is page layout?

Page layout comes from graphic design and refers to the arrangement and positioning of formal elements in a page (titles, text, images, etc.). There are a technical and an artistic approach when it come to page layout. Page layout is in part instinctive as it focuses on aesthetics, but it also supposes rules to be respected and different techniques to be mastered and applied.

For a page layout to be good and efficient, a designer must have many qualities. Intelligence is required as well as sensibility, creativity and sufficient culture, psychology and communication skills.

What is the purpose of page layout?

Page layout rules and techniques are used to customize the appearance of various types of publications magazines, newspapers, books, websites, etc. It gives a style, an ambiance, and it can add powerful connotations. A good design and a good page layout also has the power to give credibility to the brand, the company, the source of the communication.

An efficient page layout does not only manage to be aesthetic and stylish. It take in consideration cognitive ergonomics in order for the contents to have higher chances of being read and for the publication, in our case the website, to reach its goals. It is important to consider different aspects before starting to design a website and define a page layout: What is the size and format of the viewports which will be used to view the pages (desktop, mobile, tablet)? will the site be static or dynamic? Wil it be adaptive, fluid? Will it be a one-pager or multi-pages? What resolution will be used for images? etc.

What does page layout include?

Page layout first concerns the format of the medium, it's size and shape. When it comes to web design, of course, it is impossible to know the size and the format of the users browsers, but it is possible to control the layout's adaptation quite efficiently. The available space must be divided into thematic zones reserved for specific purposes.

Secondly, page layout must manage correctly the positioning of the various elements of the composition (blocks of text, images, diagrams, captions, etc.), the negative space, the margins, the spacing and relations between the elements. The usual principles of design must be applied such as unity and diversity, color scheme has to be chosen as well as well adapted fonts.

Then, the page layout must manage text contents applying correct content hierarchy by defining different levels of headings and text styles, managing text blocks, leading, kerning, lines length, etc. To do so, just like it is done for printed documents, layout grids should be produced and applied

Difference between printed and web page layout

Page layout for printed document is static. This gives more control over the aesthetics, optimization of space (fixed), which requires more graphic design and artistic skills. Although, design and page layout for multimedia and for websites isn't static, it is dynamic and requires more various skills.

For instance, websites elements need to be variable in size, scale and shape; a website may need to swap contents or for it's style to be personalized; some of them may use motion design, and needs to take navigation between contents in consideration, etc. This means different types of skills, talents and expertises often are needed in order to produce stunning and efficient documents.

Phase of layout design

As any other design or development project, it is important to complete adequately every phase so the next one can be successful.

Mandate definition

As usual, the mandate definition is produced with *a priori*, meeting with the client, research and documentation. A theoretical solution is elaborated, a flow chart is produced as well as different documents useful for the project's management. The theoretical solution is presented to the client in order to get an approval so the project can move to the next development phase.
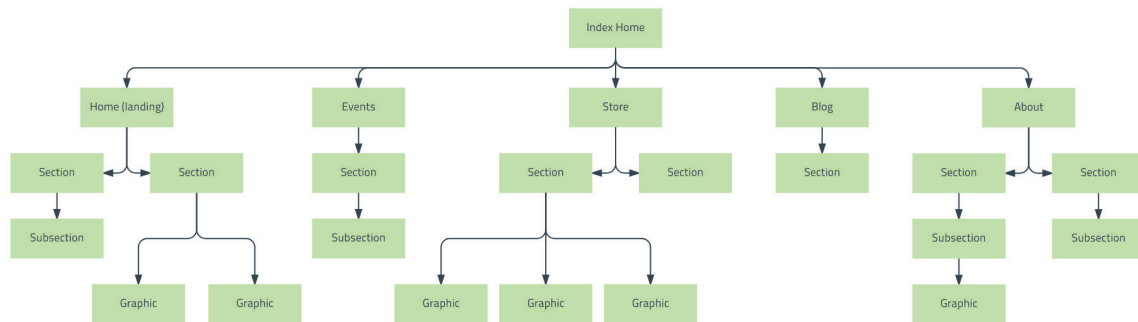

Ideation and conceptualization

Ideation is the phase where ideas are generated to be used to later produce concepts. Different techniques are use to generate initial ideas and, very often, a moodboard will be produce to help develop the style of the website to create. After having generated many ideas, those are put together and crossed to generate as many concepts as possible. Those will be developed by sketching them roughly.

From the first selection, which will be evaluated, a maximum of three concepts will finally be selected and comprehensive mockups will then be produced to be presented to the client for approval. These mockups usually include the approximate page layout that will be used in the final website.
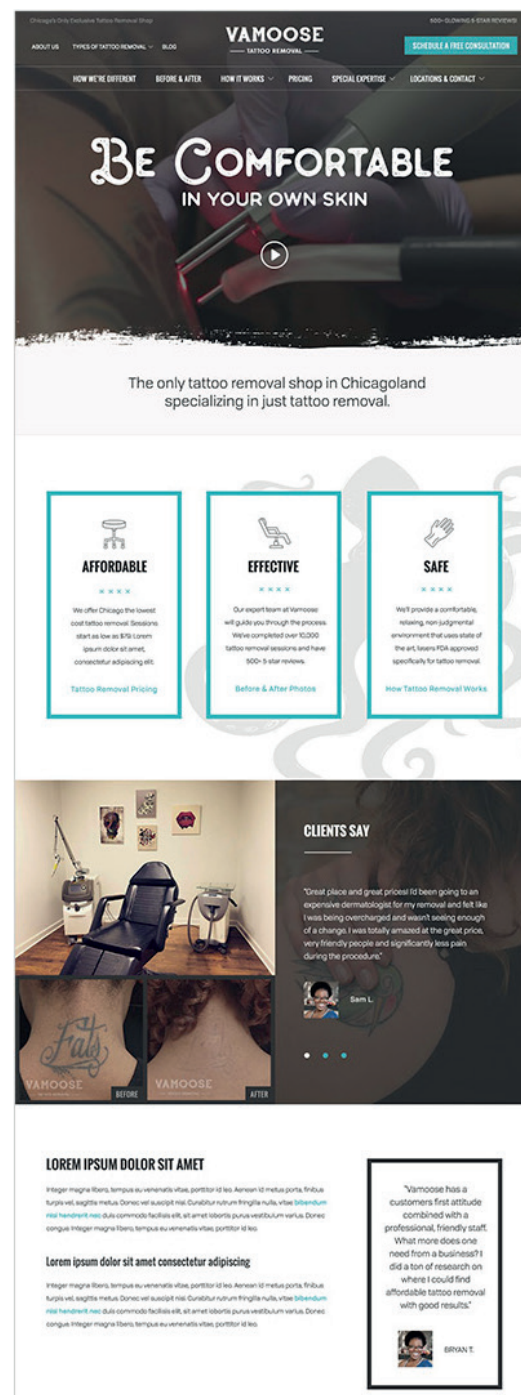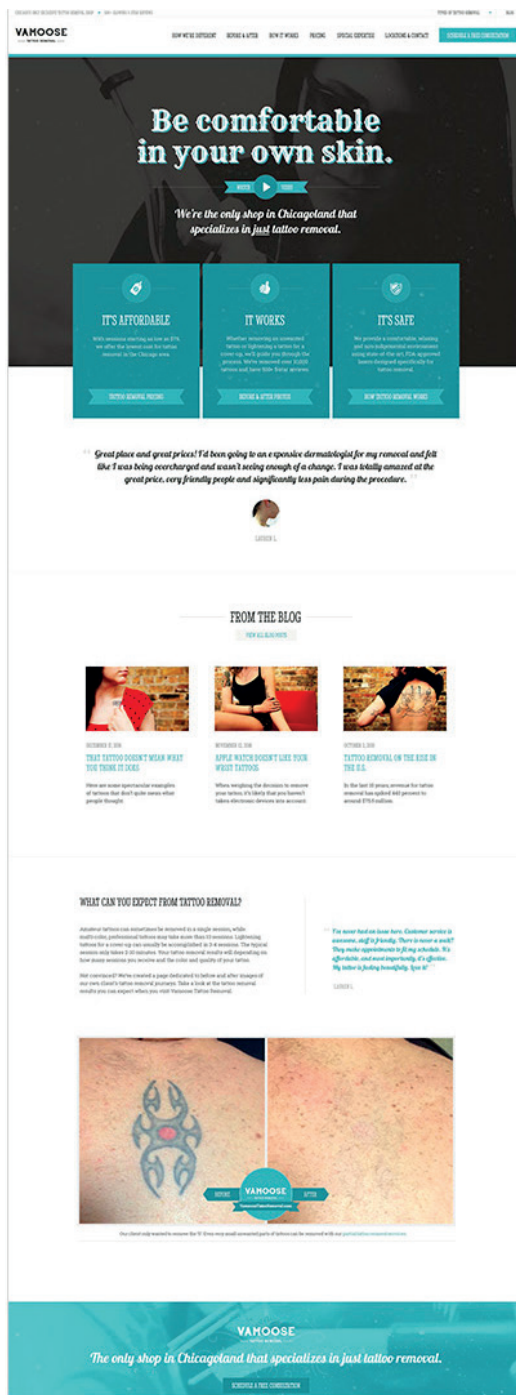
Alpha and beta versions

When a concept is approved or finalized, the interface is segmented and integrated to have a working preliminary navigational version of the website, the alpha version. Grids are developed and applied and content is gradually integrated. That is the beta version where the page layout is precisely determined.