Getting Started: Design Content First

On the Web, content is king. While website content can include words and images and video and all manner of things, the part that is king on the Web is the written content. It is beyond a doubt, the essential aspect of any site, and it's where every successful Web project begins.

Web design, then, is information design. It controls a website's presentation and flow, and how people find, understand, and use the content on that site. Within this context, the smallest "designable" element you begin with is the written word.

For example, a web designer might be asked to implement the marketing strategy of an organization to generate leads and reach its target market(s) through its website. That's basic marketing: if you can get the right message to an audience that can say yes, then you've got a customer. Of course, not every site is a commercial one with customers buying things online. Perhaps a website may belong to a non-profit whose goal is to attract volunteers or donors for the cause, or both. Or, perhaps the website is for a small business or local organization.

In a professional environment, a web designer often works with the marketing department. The web designer will identify the call to action and the target audience for the design. However, sometimes it falls to the web designer to answer these questions.

Regardless of the client or situation, it is the web designer's job to design and deliver content that leads visitors to that **call to action** — whatever that may be — *and* gets them to say yes.

So, before even beginning to code a page, a web designer needs to know a lot about how people read and assimilate information on the Web and what makes a call to action attractive. The following table lists key design specialty areas under the Web design umbrella:

Web Design Specialty Areas	
Content Strategy	**Content strategy** is about getting the right content, to the right people, in the right place, at the right time. Content strategists work to define not only what content will be published, but why it's being published in the first place.
Information Architecture	**Information architecture (IA)** is the art and science of organizing and labeling websites of all kinds to support usability and findability. The goal is to help users find information and complete tasks by helping them understand where they are on the website, what they've found, what's around, and what to expect.
User Experience Design	**User experience (UX)** focuses on having a deep understanding of site visitors, what they need, what they value, their abilities, and also their limitations. At the core of UX is ensuring that users find value in what you are providing to them.
User Interface Design	**User Interface (UI) Design** focuses on anticipating what users might need to do and ensuring that the interface has elements that are easy to access, understand, and use to facilitate those actions.

Later in the course, we will go into more detail about each of these specialties, but it's essential to understand that Web design is not art—it's not about self-expression, or anyone's favorite colors or fonts. Good web design is about guiding and helping site

visitors accomplish whatever it is they came to the site to do. It is informed by the disciplines of content strategy, information architecture, user experience design, and user interface design.

Effective Web Design

Effective web design is about more than making your content look good. It is about whether or not the design can get a site visitor to take a specific action.

Review Checkpoint

To test your understanding of the content presented in this assignment, please click on the Questions icon below. If you have trouble answering any of the questions presented here, you are always free to return to this or any assignment to re-read the material.

1. True or False?

In a professional environment, a web designer often works with a marketing department to define call-to-actions and the target audience.

a. True

Correct. This statement is true. In a professional environment, a web designer often works with the marketing department, who will identify the call to action and the target audience for the design.

b. False

Incorrect. Try again.

2. What is "good" web design?

a. A website with attractive colors and fonts

Incorrect. Try again.

b. A website with interactive elements

Incorrect. Try again.

c. A website with multi-media content, such as videos and gifs

Incorrect. Try again.

d. A website that is designed to help visitors achieve a goal

Correct. Good web design is about guiding and helping site visitors accomplish whatever it is they came to the site to do. It is informed by the disciplines of content strategy, information architecture, user experience design, and user interface design.