
Chapter 2. The Web Design Process

Figure 2.1, “Site Development Process” shows the six steps of the site development process.

Figure 2.1. Site Development Process

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1. Site Definition and Planning

The planning process involves defining the site's goals & objectives, production schedule, and staffing.

a. Goals and strategies

- What is the mission of your organization?
- How will creating a Web site support your organization's mission?
- What are your two or three most important goals for the site?
- Who is the primary audience for the Web site?
- What do you want the audience to think or do after having visited your site?
- What Web-related strategies will you use to achieve those goals?
- How will you measure the success of your site?
- How will you adequately maintain the finished site?

b. Production issues

- How many pages will the site contain?
- What special technical or functional requirements are needed?
- What is the budget for the site?
- What is the production schedule for the site?
- Who is on the development team and what are the roles & responsibilities?

c. Operations & Maintenance

- Who is responsible for the content of each page in the site?
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- How will you ensure consistent editorial, graphic design, and compliance with policies?

2. Information Architecture

The Information Architecture phase involves building navigation hierarchies and relationships between content items.

a. Site organization

Detail the organizational structure of the site - ie, the major categories of information used by customers to navigate the site.

b. Content inventory

- Inventory existing content - from online and offline sources
- Identify content gaps

c. Web site prototype

- Build site prototype
- Test site navigation and develop the user interface - include enough pages to assess accurately what it's like to move from menus to content pages.
- The prototype allows graphic designers to develop relations between how the site looks and how the navigation interface supports the information design.

3. Site design

The goal of the Site Design phase is to produce all the content components and functional programming and have them ready for the final production stage: the construction of the actual Web site pages.

a. Site look & feel elements

Page grid, page design, and overall graphic design standards are created and approved.

b. Site creative

Illustrations, photography, and other graphic or audiovisual content for the site are commissioned and created.

c. Content development

Research, writing, organizing, assembling, and editing the site's text content is performed.

d. Technical design

Any programming, database design and data entry, and search engine design should be well under way by now.

Typical products at the end of the Site Design stage could include:

a. Content components, detailed organization and assembly

- Text, edited and proofread
- Graphic design specifications for all page types
- Finished interface graphics for page templates

- Header and footer graphics, logos, buttons, backgrounds
 - Detailed page comps or finished examples of key pages
 - Site graphic standards manual for large, complex sites
 - Interface design and master page grid templates completed
 - Finished HTML template pages
 - Illustrations
 - Photography
- b. Functional and logic components
- JavaScript scripts, Java applets designed
 - Database tables and programming, interaction prototypes completed
 - Search engine designed and tested