

The Web Design Process

Creating a web site is like building a house. You must first decide on what type of house you want as well as the features in it. Based on these preferences, the architect will sketch out ideas of what your house should look like. When you choose a design of your liking, the architect will then proceed to make detailed plans for the overall structure. Once these are completed, the general contractor takes over and implements the plan, thereby finishing the house.

In this building example, the architect represents the artist and the general contractor represents the programmer. Combining both skills will ensure that the website will be finished correctly.

The web development team goes through certain steps when creating a web site. You must be familiar with these steps so that you can work effectively with the team. The following steps outline how a web site is completed from start to finish:

1. [Define Objectives](#)
2. [Construct Site Map](#)
3. [Draw Hierarchy Models](#)
4. [Design Web Pages](#)
5. [Test and Deliver Web Site](#)
6. [Document Web Site Procedures](#)
7. [Maintain Web Site](#)

Depending on the size of the project and the interaction between the client and web development team, some of these steps might be combined or carried out in a different order. A more detailed explanation of the above steps is defined in the paragraphs that follow.

1. Define Objectives

Before any design work is executed, the web development team must know what the main objectives of the site are as well as who the target audience is.

To define your objectives, please fill out the web design questionnaire thoroughly. The questionnaire will require your careful attention to every question. Answers to these questions may be given in a scheduled interview, or they can be mailed, emailed, or faxed.

2. Construct Site Map

Based on the answers to the questionnaire, the site map will be constructed and will lay the groundwork for the entire site to be built upon. The map shows how the web pages link from one page to the next and also serves as a guide towards the desired goal of the client.

If the scope of the project requires databases and application logic, other diagrams will be made using UML (Unified Modeling Language) and ERD (Entity Relationship Diagrams).

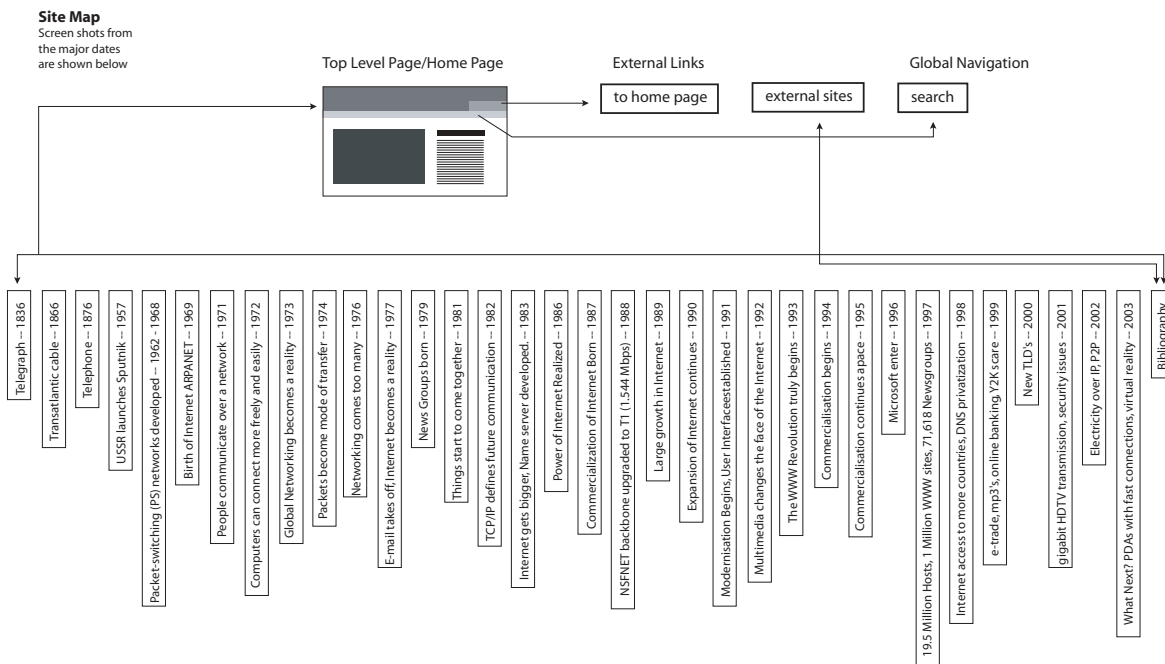


Figure 1: "Internet History" site map

3. Draw Hierarchy Models

Based on the site maps and other diagrams, web interfaces will be produced that will show how the information will be arranged. These interfaces, however, will only consist of simplified shapes of grey scale values so that the order of information will be established well before any pictures, illustrations, or long sections of text are implemented.

After this step, all the written information and images will be required to proceed to the next phase. Creative writing and image assets are additional items that can be created by the design team or supplied by the client.

Information Hierarchy Layouts for the Time line of the Internet's History
5.0+ Windows & Mac, using Netscape, IE, or AOL: Width 972 px, Height 578 px

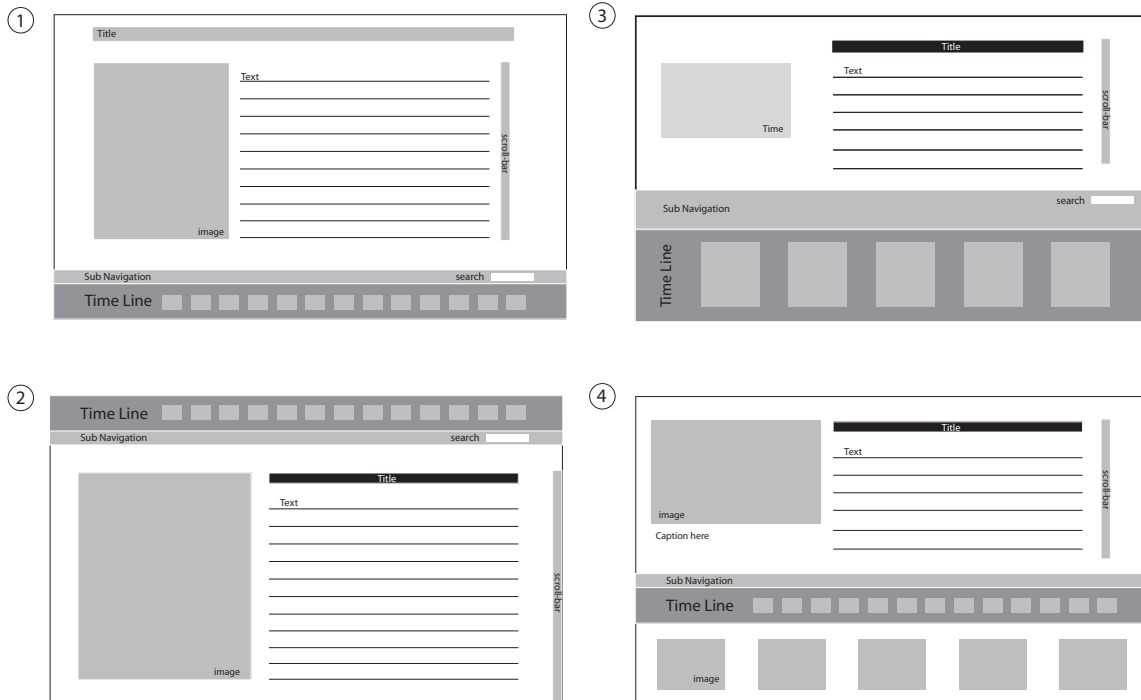


Figure 2: "Internet History" hierarchy models

4. Design Web Pages

The web page designs are created to give the viewer an idea of the look and feel of the web site. The designs will include some or all of the following: photographs, illustrations, fonts, colors, buttons, and any other design elements needed. The designers will provide the client with various web page designs to choose from.

5. Test and Deliver Web Site

This phase brings all the preliminary design work together to make a functional web site. Using the house analogy, one can understand this phase of web development as a time when the walls are erected and electricity and plumbing are fitted in.

Programmers and designers will work together to make every section of the web site functional and in tune with the plans chosen by the client. It is important to realize, however, that any major revisions during this phase can be costly in time and money. Therefore, it is advisable to make changes during steps one to three.

6. Document Web Site Procedures

A by-product of the web site development is a manual for future reference. This manual that will help keep the website consistent with the branding and internal structure. This manual will have specific guidelines relating to the visual design and software engineering of the site.

7. Maintain Web Site

The last step is an ongoing process of upkeep once the site is up and running. Traffic is monitored, backups are made, and any updates or technical problems that arise will be taken care of.