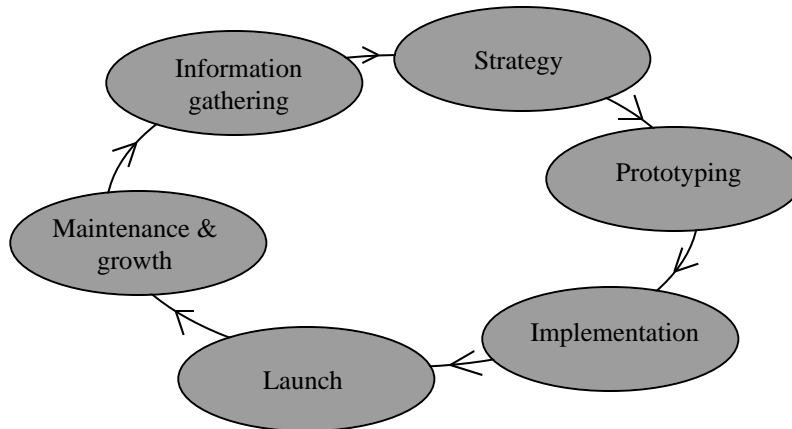


# Six Phase Process for Developing a Web Site

Source: Fleming, Jennifer, *Web Navigation: Designing the User Experience*,  
O'Reilly & Associates, Inc., Sebastopol, CA, 1998, pp. 75-104.



## Information Gathering

“Getting information from the customer”

- Understand project mission, goals, and history
- Define the audience
- Define standards for success
- Take stock of project resources
- Research the climate and competition
- Determine user goals and expectations
- Put communication methods in place

## Project Mission, Goals, & History

Every member of your team should be able to describe the site's purpose with two or three sentences outlining the site's objectives. To make these objectives clear to everyone, they should be posted next to the computers on which the team members work.

## Project Mission, Goals, & History Examples of Objectives

- Why are you building your site?
  - Attract visitors
  - Sell products
  - Provide an informational reference
- What will the site accomplish for the client?
  - Increase sales
  - Market product line
  - Reduce tech support costs

## What Defines Your Audience?

Defining your audience should make your design decisions easier. You should know characteristics such as:

- Monitor resolution
- Browser type & platform
- Connection speed
- Preferences for graphics or text
- Experience with web

## Monitor Resolution

Monitor resolution should set design parameters such as:

- maximum size of the graphics,
- page length and width, and
- complexity of page.

## Browser Type & Platform

The designer should know the browser type and the type of computer their end user will have so that they know what HTML features are supported. It should also give them an idea of the equipment they should be using for testing. Note that the customer for whom the page is being developed may not have this information and the designer may have to look elsewhere for it.

## Connection Speed

This is important information to have to know what file sizes are reasonable for the site. Remember that the typical user waits 10 seconds or less for a page to download before going elsewhere for the information.

## Preferences for Graphics or Text

Different types of sites usually govern this topic as the same audience member may like differing amounts of graphics based on what type of site they are visiting. For example, reference sites tend to have more text whereas computer tutorial sites or gaming sites will be graphic intensive.

## Experience with the Web

This issue will typically address the structure of the site. In other words, will your audience be better suited to navigate a site with a sequence, web, hierarchy, or grid structure?

## Strategy

“How do you best address the goals of the customer?”

This is basically the discussion of design team members of the issues the customer has or will have and how the web site will solve them. It involves becoming intimate with the client's situation.

## Strategy (continued...)

The design team should:

- Identify the “real” problems
- Explore real-world models in both web and other media
- Define scope of project
- Organize content
- Explore existing technical capabilities

## Prototyping “Seeing the Site”

Before the first HTML tag is placed, the designers should have a good idea of what the site will look like. This will make the HTML a simple process of “filling in the blanks”.

## Purpose of Prototyping “Why do we have to do this?”

- Allows customer to see overall design, flow, and information of a web site
- Creates roadmap for designer to follow during implementation

## What is prototyped?

- Site structure
- Site flow
- Overall design layout, sometimes referred to as the “Page Grid”
- Logos or graphics
- File/folder structure
- Colors
- Navigation method including type and placement of controls

## How do we prototype?

There are a number of methods for prototyping. The primary goal is to brainstorm your ideas using a media where sketches can be created and altered easily. Types of media include:

- Paper and pencil
- Chalkboard or whiteboard
- Word processors such as Microsoft Word
- Drawing programs such as Fireworks



## File/Folder Structure

It is impossible to manage hundreds or even thousands of HTML and graphics files using the “My Documents” method of storing files. There are usually multiple members of a team working on a site and a common method of organization is needed. Possible methods of organization include:

- Separate folders by types media  
(e.g., images, HTML, multimedia, etc.)
- Create folders that follow the structure of the site

## Implementation

It seems odd that a design should be so far along before getting to the point where HTML is being written. At this point, however, if the design is complete on paper, the creation of HTML should be trivial.

## Implementation (continued...)

During implementation continue to review your site's purpose. Anytime you add elements or make other changes to your prototype, ask yourself if it still follows the purpose of the site.

Implementation also involves a great deal of troubleshooting.

## Launching the Web Site

Launching defines the period *before* premiering the site. It involves thorough testing of the site's:

- features and operation;
- usability;
- consistency and accuracy; and
- compatibility and degradability.

## Launching (continued...)

Once the site is to the level of perfection desired by the client, the marketing of the site begins. This involves:

- META tags to add information for search engines to store about your site
- Getting other sites to create links to your site
- Incorporating the site's URL in all other marketing for your client
- Traditional marketing such as flyers

## Maintenance & Growth

Changes in the site's content, web technologies, or external factors such as your client's competition will require constant maintenance and growth to your site. In addition, errors may need to be corrected that you have found through your own periodic testing or problems reported by end-users.

## Brainstorming

When working on a team, the development of ideas depends on group creativity. Developing the tools of brainstorming will inspire this creativity.

## Rules of Brainstorming

- Suspend judgment
- Encourage wild ideas
- Encourage quantity of ideas
- Build on each other's ideas
- Write down all ideas, clustering similar ones
- Lead time is helpful allowing team members to contemplate situation