

Introduction



Designing professional Web sites is not just about making beautiful pages: It's about understanding your audience and crafting an information structure that not only meets their needs but fulfills business goals as well.

It's about working with a team of people, and understanding the interworkings of the production process from content development through to visual design, comp production, and technical integration.

Over the course of the next 300 or so pages, I show you how to understand the Web design process from start to finish, with an emphasis on creative design and development. At the end of this book, you'll have the understanding it takes to tackle a major, commercial Web site project. You'll still need lots of practice and experience to turn out the good stuff, but this book gives you the solid foundation that you need to succeed.

About This Book

This book is written for both the creative professional who's looking to get into the world of Web design, and the business professional who needs to understand the Web creative and production process in order to manage it. I'm not talking about building personal sites with frilly fonts and loud background patterns. I'm talking about building enterprise-level Web sites for real-world clients — clients ranging from Fortune 100 companies to start-ups that need high-powered Web sites to function as an integral part of a business.

Whether you're managing the process from an executive standpoint, or are a contributing team member, you'll find that the processes, tips, and techniques covered in this book are essential to every project.

By the end of this book, you'll know how to:

- ✓ Understand the team roles and responsibilities required to build a Web site
- ✓ Present work to clients
- ✓ Turn a wish list of content into an information design strategy
- ✓ Create wireframe diagrams to plan each unique page layout
- ✓ Craft visual design strategies that enhance usability and create a unique brand statement
- ✓ Choose software programs for building Web graphics

- ✓ Design graphics that download quickly and look great across platforms and browsers
- ✓ Design a user-friendly navigation system for a site
- ✓ Organize and conduct user tests
- ✓ Make technology choices

Conventions Used in This Book

Throughout this book, I use conventions in the text to make things easier to understand. For example, if I'm introducing a new term, I put it in *italics* and then define it. When I first use an industry-specific term such as *site map*, I make it italic and then give you the scoop on what it means. Usually, these terms are also accompanied by a Web Speak icon. (See the section "Icons Used in This Book," later in this Introduction.)

Code listings and Web addresses are set in a monospaced font like this: `www.dummies.com`. If I want to call your attention to a particular line or section of the code, you'll see it set in bold like this: **<body>**.

Foolish Assumptions

This book is aimed at people who suddenly find themselves in the business of designing professional Web sites. Whether you are a project or account manager looking to understand the creative and production process, a business person that needs a Web site, or a programmer that is looking to widen your creative capabilities, this book is for you.

This book is also tremendously helpful for seasoned designers and artists in other fields, such as print design and architecture, who now want to apply their creative talents to Web design. While this book is professional in focus, it is also helpful for those of you who have built personal sites and now want to take them to the next level.

You don't need to know HTML, the coding language of the Web, or high-tech programming languages in order to get the most out of these 18 chapters. In this book, you can find everything you need to know about the people, the planning processes, user interface design, graphic design, and the technologies to start on your journey as a professional Web designer. This book doesn't give you magical creative powers. It does, however, help you channel the creative juices you have into building better-looking, user-friendly, and efficient Web sites.

What You Shouldn't Read

Whatever you do, don't let the technical stuff in this book lead you astray. Throughout this book, and especially in the later chapters, I include some code examples and explain the basics of how they work. As a Web designer, you don't have to be a crack programmer; you just need to be familiar with the underlying technologies and their capabilities. The more you get into Web design, the easier it is to understand the technical stuff, and it won't look as scary.



Whenever you see the Technical Stuff icon in the margin like this, you can choose to turn a blind eye and know that you won't miss out on too much. After all, this book is geared toward creative professionals looking to apply their skills to designing Web sites, not building laser-guided satellites.

How This Book Is Organized

This book is organized to follow the basic workflow of a major Web site design project. Part I starts out with an introduction to the team members involved, and the production process you'll follow. Part II begins the Web production process by first gaining an understanding of the audience and then developing structural plans for your site. In Part III, you'll discover visual design strategies and how to prepare Web-ready graphics. To round out production, Part IV covers the essential techno-babble you need to understand, and finally, Part V sums everything up in a handy reference guide. Whew! Allow me to break it down:

Part I: The Web Design Kick-Off

Professional Web site design involves a lot of moving, interconnected tasks. To be a successful Web designer or Web manager, you must understand the entire production process and the people you'll work with along the way. Chapter 1 introduces you to the roles and responsibilities of a typical Web project while Chapter 2 outlines the production process and how to manage it.

Part II: User-Friendly Design

Understanding your audience and then crafting a site structure that not only makes sense to them but also attains business goals is a tough balancing act. Chapters 3 and 4 help you to draft the blueprints for your Web site, and Chapter 5 helps you to design visuals that help people successfully navigate your site. Chapter 6 shows you how to test your designs with the end user to see how well they work before you invest a lot of time in final production.

Part III: Designing Web Graphics

Designing the actual graphics for a Web site is the fun part. Chapters 7 through 12 discuss graphic design issues and techniques according to how they relate to the Web, along with all the technical color theory and palette stuff that you need to know. I also show you graphic production techniques and how to prepare client presentations.

Part IV: Producing the Final Web Site

After you determine the graphic and user interface design, the real work begins — assembling the designs into a working Web site. Here's where the scary technical stuff comes in. Don't worry — Chapters 13 and 14 give you a friendly tour of the inner workings of HTML, the basic language of the Web, and an introduction to Cascading Style Sheets, or CSS. Chapter 15 takes you a little further and illuminates the technologies that really turn Web sites into movin', groovin' business machines.

Part V: The Part of Tens

True to the *For Dummies* style, Chapters 16 through 18 sum up the contents of the book into Top Ten lists that you can use as handy reference guides. Rip these chapters out and stick them under your desk at work where you can easily access them without anyone ever knowing. Your boss will be impressed with the fountains of knowledge that you suddenly possess. (Then, of course, you'll have to buy a second copy of *Web Design For Dummies* that's undamaged.)

Icons Used in This Book

To make this book user-friendly, I've tagged various sections with icons that point out cool ideas, things to look out for, and industry jargon. As you read, be on the lookout for these little guys:



In talking about Web design, it's impossible to avoid the techno-babble. That's why I like to give you a little advance warning with this icon so you can mentally prepare. The technical stuff is there to give you background, but if it makes your head spin, you can choose to ignore it guilt-free. I won't blame you.



The Web design landscape is littered with land mines that can get you into trouble. Pay special attention to the stuff marked with the little bomb icon.



I love a tasty morsel of advice. I use this icon whenever I've got some cool inside information to share with you.



This icon is not exactly a bomb threat warning, but it does mark things that you should keep in mind during the course of a Web site project.



Like any other industry, Web design is fraught with insider terms. To make sure you get a high-class education here, I've pointed out all the good ones so you can carry on an informed conversation.

I'm Here if You Need Me!

Let me know what you think of the book (good or bad), if you have questions, or if you just have a good design story to share. I'm all ears at lopuck@lopuck.com.

You can also contact the publisher or authors of other *For Dummies* books by visiting the Dummies Web site at www.dummies.com. The snail-mail address is

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