

Creating a Niche for Your Craft Business Online

Module 4: Tools, Techniques, and Special Considerations

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<p>Objectives for this module: After completing this module the participant will know</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How Web page design should be planned. • The importance of metatags. • Best management practices in creating Web • Content. • Management of a Web site. • How to select a Web designer. • The importance of data logs and analysis. • Special techniques for artisan businesses. • How to add value to craft Web sites. <p>Web page design can be compared to designing your booth at an exhibition or fair. What the viewer sees in the booth or on the Web page creates an immediate image in their mind of the quality, price range, and “fit,” or suitability, of the craft product to their needs. It’s like taking a quick picture that stays with them.</p> <p>Take a look at the three Web sites on the following slides. What type of product, service, and quality of business do you believe these businesses offer, based on what you see?</p> <p>What Is Web Page Design? First, why is it important to understand something about Web page design without actually having the skills to construct your own page?</p> <p>Web page design is the process of organizing content and images on a Web page to sell your ideas and information to visitors at your Web site. Generally, the term applies to the graphic side of Web development. www.intensedevlopment.net/website-design-W.ht</p>	<p>Slide 1: Introduction</p> <p>Slide 2: Objectives</p> <p>Slide 3: Violet Crown Soap Company Slide 4: Handweavers Guild of America Slide 5: Over the Moon Jewelry Discuss</p> <p>Slide 6: Web Page Design</p> <p>Slide 7: Knowledge = Better Results Go to www.google.com. In the search box, type in “Define: search engine”, then find other Web terms you may be unsure of. This allows you to find definitions and conduct very specific searches of information that you will not be able to find easily any other way. It reduces time considerably when conducting online market research.</p>

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<p>Deciding What Your Web Page Will Look Like</p> <p>The Web site development process might follow these steps:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Research online competition and look at examples. b. Select a domain name. Register the domain name; set up e-mail accounts, design logo, and so forth. c. Create a Web site outline or site map; some call it a storyboard. d. Write the initial text, with images. e. Create an initial page layout design to establish a look and feel. f. Edit and finish the text and images for the Web site. g. Finish the page layout design. h. Build Version 1.0 of the working Web site. <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>Never place on the working site: Under construction.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Revise and build Version 2.0 of the working Web site. j. Test the site with potential customers. Obtain input from them on the look, quality, and navigation of the site. Revise and build Version 3.0, if necessary. k. Launch the final Web site. l. Revise and update the Web site regularly. <p>Completely revise every two years. Monitor Web site statistics, and make adjustments to add text and daily/monthly budgets.</p>	<p>Slide 8: Plan What Goes on the Web Page</p>

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<p>Future Implementation and Updates</p> <p>Based on a six-month observation of Web site statistics, make adjustments to the navigation, text, and other characteristics of your Web site to optimize the buying and searching experience. Add new materials and products. Most Web sites are completely overhauled every 1–2 years</p> <p>Getting Found in a World of Craft</p> <p>There are millions of Web sites and hundreds of thousands of craft sites. One study found over 1,200 international handcraft Web sites. Another study located crafting sites totaling over 2,000, and that includes over 400 sites devoted to discussion groups focused on “creating craft.” These sites are your online competitors.</p> <p>Search Engine Strategies: You Have Choices</p> <p>First, you or your Web designer should create a search engine “friendly” Web page. What is a search engine friendly design? It’s one that allows search engines to find your page information efficiently and quickly. Avoid pages designed with Frames; do not use Java Script, Flash, CGI scripts, or active server pages and database-driven Web sites source: http://semlist.com/definitions.php.</p> <p>What makes a Web page search engine “search-friendly”? Content, navigation, and <i>metatags</i> that are relevant to the site provide information and allow a search engine to find your page and list it.</p>	<p>Slide 9: Storyboard</p> <p><i>Activity</i></p> <p>Let’s see how many Web sites you can find for craft just here in the U.S. Go to www.google.com. Type in “craft”, see how many sites are found. Then add “United States” and see how many are found. Then add the medium you work in, i.e., metal, fiber, etc. Placing quotation marks around the phrases drastically narrows or refines the search results.</p> <p>Slide 10: Web Site Tree Diagram</p> <p><i>Activity</i></p> <p>Go to www.searchengines.com. Look for “search engines” in the left column. How many search engines do you see listed? Conduct a search using the word “handcraft”. How quickly do sites come up? What else appears with these key words?</p> <p>Slide 11: Process for Developing First Page Slide 12: Finding Craft Sites</p>

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<p>What Content Should Go on Your Web Page?</p> <p>How long does the page have to make an impression before the customer moves on to another site? Three seconds, according to interactive marketing solutions firm Questus, 2006 www.clickz.com/stats/sectors/software/print.php/378366.</p> <p>It's a combination of usability and aesthetics. There's a fine line between not enough product and too much product. Provide only what is necessary to tell about your business, your product, and in your contact information. The American Craft Council's site is a good example of simplicity and very effective use of graphics www.craftcouncil.org ; click on "About CRAFT".</p> <p>The design of your Web page is keenly important to those who shop at your site. There are many types of Web page design possibilities. The KISS (Keep It Simple Stupid) principal still applies. It could be a single design, a few lines about the business, an introductory page with options for further detail, or any number of possibilities. One study by Questus on interactive marketing solutions reports that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 37 percent of those surveyed said ease of navigation is critical to their decision to purchase; • 32 percent said checkout must be easy to navigate; • 38 percent said product description is critical. <p>Key factors in leaving the site without purchasing were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • no desire to register with the site, • difficulty in locating products, • inaccurate information, • lack of trust of site or security of site. 	<p>Slide 13: Search Engines</p> <p>Slide 14: View: Source: Metatags Find metatags on Web pages on these slides. What titles do you see? What description do you see? What key words do you see?</p> <p>Slide 15: Exercise in Metatags Could you make suggestions for improving these metatags for easier and faster location? Try your hand at writing the metatags for your site.</p> <p>Slide 16: Impression in THREE Seconds</p> <p>Slide 17: www.artehuaxyacac.com</p> <p>Slide 18: www.cowboyslstride.com</p> <p>Slide 19: www.fisterrastudio.com</p> <p>Slide 20: TCAnet Village Difficult to determine who the page is intended to reach.</p> <p>Slide 21: Art of Ohio Tamarack</p>

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<p>Selecting and Working with Web</p> <p>Page Designers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn the lingo of technologists. • Do your homework. • Ask questions. • View their work. • Get references. • Ask for fee sheet. • Have a contract. • Expect quality of service. • For the most part, avoid using friends and relatives. The same applies to selling to friends and relatives. <p>Think about the type of businesspeople you prefer to work with. Do you need direction? Do you want flexibility/timeliness?</p> <p>Some Dos and Don'ts for the Craft Business Owner</p> <p>Whether you choose to have someone else design the site or you do it through software or a template, like Yahoo, Google, or others, follow these simple guidelines:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid too many graphics. • Don't try to entertain the viewer. • Remember, you're a business. • Be professional. • Think professionally. • Focus your site and your work with that site. • Be available. • Set your hours. • Relationships in the craft industry are the most important element in selling craft. <p>Build a relationship with the Web user as well as the face-to-face customer.</p>	<p>Slide 22: Calendar of Shows: Message to Future Customers?</p> <p>Slide 23: Inaccurate or Incomplete Information</p> <p>Slide 24: Key Factors in Securing Online Purchase</p>

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<p>Special Artisan Considerations Non-Internet Marketing Having a Web presence is critical to being found globally 24/7. Yet there are techniques that are part of the marketing plan that are critical as well. Place your Web URL in and on everything possible. Following is a list of locations and suggestions for placement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TV—if you advertise on TV or are sponsored by a group that advertises on TV, the ad with the URL should be easily seen in a readable font (not smaller than the other type on the screen). One study (Brechner, 2004) found in both commercials and printed ads that the URL was in very small print and either not read or too small to read, and it remained on the TV screen for less than three seconds—hardly time to remember and write down the address. • Packing and shipping resources. Customers expect quality every step of the way in their purchase. Poor choices in packaging the craft product can result in breakage and a lost customer. On the Web site, packing and shipping should be considered additional expenses to the purchase. Do you guarantee against breakage or damage? • Check the appropriate resource on sales tax for your state. In Texas, the State Comptroller’s Web site is the source of accurate information www.window.state.tx.us <p>Customer service counts—even online.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respond to e-mails within 24 hours. • The customer is always right. 	<p>Slide 25: www.theglassden.com Example of Web page design by ISP with little or no knowledge of the craft medium</p> <p>This was a simple page design that cost about \$300 for the beginning entrepreneur. The page result was the Web designer’s interpretation of the owner’s description.</p> <p>What do you think?</p> <p>Slide 26: Artisan Web Sites</p> <p>Slide 27: Dos and Don’ts</p> <p>Slide 28: Special Considerations for Artisan Pages</p> <p>Slide 29: Special Considerations: Internet Marketing</p> <p>Look for packaging guidelines from the USPS, UPS and DHL.</p> <p>Discuss your experiences in receiving well packed goods vs. those that are not well packed. How much should you charge for packaging, handling, and shipping?</p> <p>Go to your state’s State Comptroller Web site and work through the process to obtain a tax ID number.</p>

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<p>Web Site Dos and Don'ts</p> <p>Evaluating your plans Does the site measure up to critical criteria for Web site design for user needs and satisfaction?</p> <p>Creating Value in the Artisan Web Site</p> <p>Perceived Value Measures Site Usefulness to Users</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Does the home page provide evidence that users' goals can be accomplished (user = the customer)? 2. Is the essential content available where needed? 3. Is essential function available where needed? 4. Are essential content and function given priority on the page? <p>Source: <i>Best and Worst of Site Design</i>, 2005, Forrester Research, Inc. 3-11-05 www.Forrester.com</p> <p>Making Your Craft Business a Successful Online Experience Consumers of craft, and particularly fine handcraft, prefer the experience of shopping, the "sense of place" in a gallery, museum, or even a festival booth. Creating a similar look and feel to your Web site is critical.</p> <p>Photographs. Poorly staged photos appear poor online. Usually, the pixel size is too small. Remember that more pixels per square inch equals a better photo online. Another critical factor is how the craft is placed in regard to the contrasting background (lighting, range). <i>The Crafts Report</i> is an excellent source of photographic know-how for crafters. Seek out photographic associations for sources of good photographers.</p>	<p>Slide 30: www.clvquilts.com</p> <p>Activity</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Can detail on quilts be seen easily? 2. What is the essential content on this site? 3. Do you have to go to another page to find it? 4. Is it clear? 5. Are all essential functions present? 6. Enlarging photos? 7. Contact info, etc.? 8. What are the priorities of this site? 9. Do words mean the same to all of you? 10. Can they be confused? 11. What value-added feature can you create in your site? <p>Slide 31: Online Mall</p> <p>Slide 32: Problems with pictures. What happens when you enlarge the picture to see details?</p>

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<p>Artisan story. Galleries and specialty handcraft retailers provide the craft customer with background information on the designer. Usually this is in the form of a hangtag, brochure, or card that explains the philosophy of the artisan. It is much more than a hangtag with price, SKU number, and size. Take time to write your story. Place it on your Web site as an option for visitors to read. It should be brief, create a visual image in the mind of the reader, and emphasize the uniqueness of the design and/or process.</p> <p>Navigation. Customer Should easily find value on the site through methods provided.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Are category and subcategory names clear and mutually exclusive? 2. Do menu categories immediately expose or describe their subcategories? 3. Are items classified logically? 4. Is the task flow efficient? 5. Are hyperlinks clear and informative? 6. Are keyword-based searches comprehensive and precise? <p>Presentation. Customers should experience ease of understanding the value of the site, in regard to its language, legibility, graphics, and page layout.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Is the language easy to understand? 2. Are graphics, icons, and symbols easy to understand? 3. Is text legible? Text is most legible in a sans serif font. Look at font styles under format. 4. Does text formatting and layout support easy scanning? 5. Do page layouts use space effectively? 6. Are form fields and interactive elements placed logically on the page? 7. Are interactive elements easily recognizable? 8. Are interactive elements consistent? 9. Does the site accommodate the user's range of hand-eye coordination? 10. Does the site meet Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements? 	<p><i>Activity</i> Have audience write a one paragraph “story” about them and their craft making.</p> <p>Slide 33: www.mbaer.com</p> <p>What options are available for sorting products by color, price or type?</p> <p>Slide 34: Make Words Count!</p>

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<p>Trust. Be sensitive to factors that affect the customer’s perception of reliability and dependability.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Does the site present privacy and security policies in context? 2. Do pages provide location cues? 3. Does the site functionality provide feedback in response to user actions? 4. Is contextual help available at key points? 5. Does the site help users recover from errors? 6. Does the site perform well? <p>User-friendliness. Using trigger words to hyperlinks allows you to avoid phrases like <i>click here</i> and <i>learn more</i>. Help customers find their way through the site to what they want or need. Do hyperlinks change color when accessed, and do they remain very readable?</p> <p>Is there a site map? A site map is based on a taxonomy that cross-lists items. It makes a logical association for the customer.</p> <p>Is text formatted for easy reading? Does it use bullets, varied background colors, and liberal white space for easy reading? Avoid a black background; it doesn’t print well. Is each page easy to scan? Customers look for relevant information before reading details. Have menus, links, and buttons that look and work alike throughout your site.</p> <p>Do pages relate logically to each other? For example if a customer were looking at custom lamps, would there be a model showing choices in lamp shades, colors of lamp bases, differing heights of lamps example from glass blowers.</p> <p>Is contact information available during checkout? Have you provided definitions of unknown terms (finishes, structural terms, etc.), charts with shipping charges, and other services such as newsletters and new product alerts?</p>	<p>Slide 35: www.threadpit.com</p> <p>Slide 36: Guide the Craft Customer</p> <p>Slide 37: National Craft Association</p> <p>Slide 38: Site Visits www.michaelallison.us/ www.swschool.org/gallery-shop.php</p> <p>Slide 39: Logical & Contextual?</p>

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<p>Accessibility. All sites should be reviewed for compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). See these Web sites for a review of information on making your Web site accessible to people with disabilities: www.window.state.tx.us</p> <p><i>Summary</i> In this workshop we have covered the following:</p> <p>The depth and breadth of the artisan economy and your role in that economy</p> <p>Craft consumer research and trends</p> <p>Making your craft business stronger – online</p> <p>Marketing your craft business</p> <p>Tools and techniques in the best practices of Web design</p> <p>Evaluation tips for ongoing e-commerce</p> <p>Conclusion. What remains to be done is for you to examine your own sites or intentions for craft Web sites.</p> <p>Be ready to take action once you return to your work or business.</p> <p>Be prepared to tell us what you have done through an online survey about six months from now.</p>	<p>Slide 40: Accessibility</p> <p>Slide 41: Summary</p>