

CMGT 528: WEB DESIGNS FOR ORGANIZATIONS SUMMER 2015

Instructor: Freddy J. Nager, MBA, fnager@usc.edu

Class Time: Tuesdays 6-10 PM, May 26-August 11

Classroom: ANN 209

Office Hours: on class days by appointment

Course Description

Website development is not what it used to be. Since the first website launched in 1993, the responsibilities of developers, strategists, and managers have significantly evolved. Web professionals can no longer simply repurpose print media to create static "brochure-ware." They are now expected to plan, direct, and manage websites that *perform* as well as inform: reducing organizational costs, improving customer service, and contributing to bottom-line goals.

In this course, students will assess the online needs of organizations, explore electronic commerce amidst global pressures, and craft Web content strategies that serve organizational objectives. This is not a "design" course in terms of art direction, although design principles will be discussed. Nor is it a programming course — no expertise in software or programming languages is required. Rather, this course emphasizes website development strategy:

- How to research site users and other stakeholders, and gain useful insights into their habits and needs.
- How to use online content to shape, enhance, protect, and promote individual and institutional brands.
- How to evaluate and select website publishing platforms and content management systems.
- How to optimize online content (text, images, video, etc.) for search engines and site visitors.
- How to analyze site traffic and behavior to discern trends and improve the user experience.
- How to create governance policies and standards to meet short- and long-term objectives.
- How to organize and direct multidisciplinary teams to create and maintain websites and other content.

This course will cover these topics, combining theory, practical skills, and hands-on experience, with students expected to demonstrate strong writing, management, and collaboration skills.

Student Objectives

1. Understand key strategies, analytical frameworks, and technological trends to develop and manage professional websites.
2. Know how to evaluate the qualifications, recommendations, and service offerings of website development vendors and specialists.
3. Develop and direct website content that resonates with customers, achieves the goals of companies/clients, and meets the latest Google search standards.
4. Understand the value of structure and semantics in creating and organizing content, and repurposing it for non-web platforms, such as mobile devices.
5. Gain practical experience managing a website, while developing content strategy for a site of their own.

About the Instructor

Freddy J. Nager has over 20 years of experience in website management and marketing strategies. In 1994, he served as Editor of one of the Web's first entertainment sites, AMP: MCA Records Online. He then joined major ad agency Saatchi & Saatchi as Sr. Interactive Copywriter, where he wrote all online content for Toyota USA, including its award-winning website. Freddy has also worked on sites for Nissan/Infiniti, the National Lampoon, and numerous startups. He currently runs the marketing consultancy Atomic Tango LLC. A second-generation Trojan, Freddy received his MBA from the USC Marshall School of Business and his BA from Harvard University.

Grading Scale + Course Standards

A	95.0% or higher
A-	90.0%-94.9%
B+	87.0%-89.9%
B	83.0%-86.9%
B-	80.0%-82.9%
C+	77.0%-79.9%
C	73.0%-76.9%
C-	70.0%-72.9% (C- or lower is a failing grade)
D	60.0%-69.9%
F	59.9% or lower

Please note that A's and A-minuses are not default grades; they must be earned by "going the extra mile" to develop professional-caliber work that could be presented to a client or CEO. A-level work is mistake-free; demonstrates the ability to apply research; reflects a strong understanding of the theories, frameworks, and strategies discussed in the lectures and readings; and shows creativity and superlative communications skills. Personal recommendations will be provided on request to students who earn an A or A-.

- **Attendance:** This course moves quickly and most classes cover a unique topic, so you must attend every class, arrive on time, and stay for the entire class. Makeup assignments will be given for any absences. Should you need to miss a class, you must notify the instructor in advance (except, of course, in the case of illness or emergencies). If you are absent, you need to obtain what you missed from your classmates and Blackboard. Two absences will result in complete loss of participation points. More than two absences will result in a grade of C- or lower for the course. Note that arriving late by more than 10 minutes or leaving early counts as a half absence.
- **Critical Thinking:** In communications management there are few "right" answers: what works for one company at one time might fail for another company — or even for the same company at another time. All assignments will be evaluated on the quality of your reasoning, and how well they integrate lessons from the reading, class discussions, and supplementary research. You must demonstrate critical thinking that describes "why" and "how," not just "what."
- **Professional Writing:** Since this a graduate program in communications, your writing and formatting matter, so please proofread to eliminate all errors. If you need help with fluency or simply polishing your work, contact CMGT writing coach Michael Robinson at cmgt.writing@usc.edu. You may also visit the USC Writing Center or Language Academy for international students: http://college.usc.edu/writingcenter/information_for_students/online_resources.html.
- **Respect:** Accord classmates, guest speakers, and your instructor with courtesy. You may certainly question and criticize ideas — indeed, that is encouraged in the learning environment — but never criticize the person. Also, *be present*: **all computers and phones must be turned off during class** — no exceptions. You may bring food to class, but please do not eat while guest speakers are present.
- **ADA Compliance Statement:** Any student requesting academic accommodation based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to your instructor as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 am-5:00 pm, Monday through Friday. The phone number is 213-740-0776.
- **Plagiarism:** Plagiarism is a cardinal sin in academia, and the penalties for plagiarism are substantial, resulting in a "0" for the assignment, plus possible disciplinary action. You must understand what constitutes plagiarism, and exercise scrupulous effort to avoid it. Copying even as little as one sentence without proper use of quotation marks and reference notes constitutes plagiarism. Please ask your instructor if you are unsure what constitutes plagiarism.
- **Statement on Academic Integrity:** USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the

expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one's own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another's work as one's own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. Scampus, the Student Guidebook, contains the Student Conduct Code in Section 11.00, while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A: <http://www.usc.edu/dept/publications/SCAMPUS/gov/> Students will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards for further review, should there be any suspicion of academic dishonesty. The review process can be found at: <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/>

Assignments

These assignments are not reports; they should demonstrate your original thinking and ability to apply research, theories, and frameworks to support your ideas. All assignments must be posted as an MS Word document (no PDFs) to Blackboard by the due date. Without an exceptional circumstance and permission from the instructor in advance, late assignments will not be accepted. The specific assignment guidelines and instructions will be provided on each assignment prompt.

- **Individual Website Evaluation (20%), due June 2:** For your first assignment, you will critically analyze the website of any B-Corporation (at bcorporation.net) on the basis of the 3B's:
 - **Brand:** What is a brand, and why is it important for websites? Support your answer with research, then analyze how your company's website expresses and supports its brand.
 - **Buzz:** How can a website generate "word of mouth" and press coverage? Support your answer with research, then analyze whether your company's website is "buzz-worthy."
 - **Behavior:** What is a "conversion" on a website? Support your answer with research, then analyze what conversions (if any) your company's website supports, the calls-to-action, and how effective it is at driving those conversions.

Length: 1000 words (approximately 2 pages). Note: *This first assignment will be reviewed and graded, and returned to you for revisions. The purpose is to improve your writing skills and clarify expectations for the semester. Revised papers do not earn a guaranteed A grade.*
- **Website Plan (2 parts):** You will form teams to develop a complete plan for a new website, either for yourself or a client. This plan consists of two parts:
 - **Individual Stakeholders Analysis (20%), due June 16:** Each member of the team will research analyze a competitor, a community stakeholder, and create one customer persona (3 stakeholders total). Team members will consult each other beforehand to assign targets and avoid overlap. Length: 1000 words (approximately 2 pages).
 - **Team Website Plan (20%), due August 11:** Based on the Stakeholders Analyses, you will provide specific directions for a brand bible (design, copy and tone); a sitemap of all content pages; SEO (keywords, backlink strategy, usage guides); governance policies; conversion goals and KPI's. You must support your decisions with references to course readings and additional sources. Length: 5000 words (approximately 10 pages).
- **Article Presentations (20%):** While all students are responsible for reading all the assigned articles, each student will be assigned 2 of the articles to summarize, evaluate, and apply to real world examples.
- **Class Website Management (10%):** To simulate a group-managed professional site, all students will collaborate in creating a WordPress blog for the class, with each student responsible for writing and keyword-optimizing at least one blogpost (approximately 500 words). As part of this process, students will chronicle all decisions, individual contributions, and the site's analytics.
- **Class participation (10%):** Each student must contribute to the learning in this class. You will not earn the full score simply by attending classes. In most class sessions, you must speak, ask questions, and debate respectfully. To do so, you must prepare: complete the assigned readings before class; research additional materials; and apply to personal and professional experiences. Staying silent is unacceptable behavior, especially when we have guest speakers, since it conveys disengagement. In addition, use of phones or computers in class will count as being "absent." Here is how class participation is evaluated, both in the classroom and on Blackboard:
 - Is your contribution relevant to the discussion?

- Do you consider ideas offered by the reading and by classmates?
- Do you increase everyone's understanding or merely repeat facts?
- Are your views supported with data, third-party theories and research?
- Do you test new ideas and challenge assumptions, or just "play it safe"?
- Are you respectful of others in the discussion?

Readings

Textbook:

- Hinton, Andrew, Understanding Context: Environment, Language, And Information Architecture, 2015 O'Reilly Media.

Articles:

- Altimeter Group, "Content: The New Marketing Equation," 2012
- Anderson, Chris, "The Long Tail," *Wired*, October 2004, <http://archive.wired.com/wired/archive/12.10/tail.html>
- Ariely, Dan, "Gamed: How Companies Get You to Share More and Spend More," *Wired*, 20 June 2011, http://www.wired.com/magazine/2011/06/ff_gamed
- Bashford, Suzy, "Masterclass: Web design," *Revolution*, 16 September 2010, via *Business Insights: Essentials*
- Bell, David; Choi, Joenghye; & Lodish, Leonard, "What Matters Most in Internet Retailing," *MIT Sloan Management Review*, 18 September 2012, <http://sloanreview.mit.edu/article/what-matters-most-in-internet-retailing/>
- Christian, Brian, "The A/B Test: Inside the Technology That's Changing the Rules of Business," *Wired*, 25 April 2012, http://www.wired.com/business/2012/04/ff_abtesting
- Dean, Brian, "How to Create a Page That Converts at 21.7% (Step-By-Step Case Study)," *Backlinko*, 5 June 2014, <http://backlinko.com/social-squeeze-page>
- Hermeking, Marc, "Culture and Internet Consumption: Contributions from Cross-Cultural Marketing and Advertising Research," *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 9 August 2006, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2006.tb00310.x/abstract>
- Hinton, Andrew, "Personas and the Role of Design Documentation," *Boxes and Arrows*, 27 February 2008, <http://boxesandarrows.com/personas-and-the-role-of-design-documentation/>
- Kuzic, Jose, et al, "Web Design and Company Image," *Issues in Informing Science and Information Technology*, 2010
- Kastner, Margit & Stangl, Brigitte, "Mapping Segments Accessing User-Generated Content and Website Applications in a Joint Space," *International Journal of Culture, Tourism, and Hospitality Research*, 2012
- Kaushik, Avinash, "7 Incredible Web Design, Branding, Digital Marketing Experiences," *Occam's Razor (Kaushik.net)*, 28 January 2013, <http://www.kaushik.net/avinash/web-design-branding-digital-marketing-experiences/>
- Kelleher, Tom & Miller, Barbara, "Organizational Blogs and the Human Voice: Relational Strategies and Relational Outcomes," *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 9 August 2006, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2006.00019.x/abstract>
- Lambert, Craig, "The Way of the Blockbuster," *Harvard Magazine*, January-February 2014, <http://harvardmagazine.com/2014/01/the-way-of-the-blockbuster>
- Laseter, Timothy, et al, "3 Critical Issues in Internet Retailing," *MIT Sloan Management Review*, 1 April 2007, <http://sloanreview.mit.edu/article/critical-issues-in-internet-retailing/>
- Moz.com, "The Beginner's Guide to SEO," <http://moz.com/beginners-guide-to-seo>
- Shannak, Rifat & Qasrawri, Nada, "Using Web Analytics to Measure the Effectiveness of Online Advertising Media," *European Journal of Economics, Finance and Administrative Sciences*, December 2011
- Singhal, Amit, "More Guidance On Building High-Quality Sites," *Google Webmaster Central Blog*, 6 May 2011, <http://googlewebmastercentral.blogspot.com/2011/05/more-guidance-on-building-high-quality.html>
- Swire, Robin, "The Art of Thinking Sideways: Content Marketing for Boring Businesses," *Moz*, 8 April 2014, <http://moz.com/blog/the-art-of-thinking-sideways-content-marketing-for-boring-businesses>
- Walther, Joseph & Jang, Jeong-Woo, "Communications Processes in Participatory Websites," *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 10 October 2012, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2012.01592.x/abstract>

- Weill, Peter & Woerner, Stephanie, "Optimizing Your Digital Business Review," MIT Sloan Management Review, 19 March 2013, <http://sloanreview.mit.edu/article/optimizing-your-digital-business-model/>
- Withrow, Jason, "Competitive Analysis: Understanding the Market Context," Boxes and Arrows, 7 February 2006, <http://boxesandarrows.com/competitive-analysis-understanding-the-market-context/>

Recommended Websites:

- Boxes and Arrows, boxesandarrows.com
- Google Webmaster Central Blog, googlewebmastercentral.blogspot.com
- Interaction Design Foundation, interaction-design.org
- MOZ, moz.com
- UX Matters, uxmatters.com

Calendar

Part I: Planning

Class 1, May 26: Defining Content Strategy + The Role of Professional Strategist

- What is website content strategy, why it's important, and how it's evolved
- Roles and responsibilities of the modern strategist
 - Brand: perpetuating and enhancing the company image and reputation
 - Buzz: generating word of mouth
 - Behavior: motivating customer actions that meet organizational objectives
- Readings for next week:
 - Understanding Context, Part 1 (Chapters 1-3) — discuss on Blackboard
 - Altimeter Group, "Content: The New Marketing Equation," 2012 (on Blackboard)
- Assignment 1: Website Evaluation, due before class on June 2

Class 2, June 2: Researching Stakeholders – Who Exactly Is Your Audience?

- Defining and analyzing your key global stakeholders, their needs, and their potential impact:
 - Customers: site users, customers/clients, job seekers, news media, investors
 - Competitors: direct and indirect
 - Company/Client: CEO/owner, finance, marketing, legal, IT
 - Community: other agencies/vendors (PR, social, etc.), government, referrers, browsers
- Setting goals based on stakeholder requirements
- Regulations: from privacy to accessibility
- Readings for next week:
 - Understanding Context, Part 2 (Chapters 4-7) — discuss on Blackboard
 - Hermeking, Marc, "Culture and Internet Consumption: Contributions from Cross-Cultural Marketing and Advertising Research," Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 9 August 2006, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2006.tb00310.x/abstract>
 - Hinton, Andrew, "Personas and the Role of Design Documentation," Boxes and Arrows, 27 February 2008, <http://boxesandarrows.com/personas-and-the-role-of-design-documentation/>
 - Kastner, Margit & Stangl, Brigitte, "Mapping Segments Accessing User-Generated Content and Website Applications in a Joint Space," International Journal of Culture, Tourism, and Hospitality Research, 2012 (on Blackboard)
 - Withrow, Jason, "Competitive Analysis: Understanding the Market Context," Boxes and Arrows, 7 February 2006, <http://boxesandarrows.com/competitive-analysis-understanding-the-market-context/>
 - Assignment: Stakeholders Analysis due before class June 16

Class 3, June 9: Selecting Content Management Systems

- CMS platforms
- Database-driven content + personalization
- Structure conceptualization
 - message purposes and prioritization
 - charting a desired path
 - microsites vs subsections
 - nomenclature
 - media format (text, photos, videos, gamification)

- Content sources: UGC, original, licensed
- Readings for next week:
 - Understanding Context, Part 3 (Chapters 8-11) — discuss on Blackboard

Class 4, June 16: Establishing Governance and Workflow

- Editorial calendars and page tables
 - page objective and key messages
 - content sourcing
 - phases of development
 - content ownership and approvals
 - maintenance frequency
- Readings for next week:
 - Understanding Context, Part 4 (Chapters 12-14) — discuss on Blackboard

Part II: Development

Class 5, June 23: Developing Content Substance

- Creative Direction
 - developing the style guide
 - voice and tone
 - globalization vs localization
 - imagery and design
- Readings for next week:
 - Understanding Context, Part 5 (Chapters 15-18) — discuss on Blackboard
 - Kaushik, Avinash, "7 Incredible Web Design, Branding, Digital Marketing Experiences," Occam's Razr (Kaushik.net), 28 January 2013, <http://www.kaushik.net/avinash/web-design-branding-digital-marketing-experiences/>
 - Kuzic, Jose, et al, "Web Design and Company Image," Issues in Informing Science and Information Technology, 2010 (on Blackboard)
 - Bashford, Suzy, "Masterclass: Web design," Revolution, 16 September 2010: 32 (via *Business Insights: Essentials*)

Class 6, June 30: Optimizing for Search Engines

- SEO
 - creating "Linkbait": content that inspires backlinking, sharing
 - keywords and formatting
 - encouraging desired user behavior
 - Blackhat techniques: short-term tricks that hurt in the long run
 - long tail
- Readings for next week:
 - Moz.com, "The Beginner's Guide to SEO," <http://moz.com/beginners-guide-to-seo>
 - Singhal, Amit, "More Guidance On Building High-Quality Sites," by Google Webmaster Central Blog, 6 May 2011, googlewebmastercentral.blogspot.com/2011/05/more-guidance-on-building-high-quality.html
 - Anderson, Chris, "The Long Tail," Wired, October 2004, <http://archive.wired.com/wired/archive/12.10/tail.html>

Class 7, July 7: Integrating Blogs, Social Media, and Mobile

- Blogging
 - personalizing the corporation
 - demonstrating expertise
 - blog promotion
- Social media's role in content strategy:
 - sharing
 - sign-ins
- Mobile browser issues
- Location-specific content
- Reading:

- Understanding Context, Part 6 (Chapters 19-22) — discuss on Blackboard
- Kelleher, Tom & Miller, Barbara, "Organizational Blogs and the Human Voice: Relational Strategies and Relational Outcomes," *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 9 August 2006, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2006.00019.x/abstract>
- Lambert, Craig, "The Way of the Blockbuster," *Harvard Magazine*, January-February 2014, <http://harvardmagazine.com/2014/01/the-way-of-the-blockbuster>
- Swire, Robin, "The Art of Thinking Sideways: Content Marketing for Boring Businesses," *Moz*, 8 April 2014, <http://moz.com/blog/the-art-of-thinking-sideways-content-marketing-for-boring-businesses>
- Walther, Joseph & Jang, Jeong-Woo, "Communications Processes in Participatory Websites," *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 10 October 2012, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2012.01592.x/abstract>

Class 8, July 14: Supporting Ecommerce

- Content strategy for ecommerce sites
 - cross-selling/upselling
 - customer-relationship management (CRM)
- DIY vs outsourcing (Amazon)
- Affiliate Programs
- Reading:
 - Ariely, Dan, "Gamed: How Companies Get You to Share More and Spend More," *Wired*, 20 June 2011, http://www.wired.com/magazine/2011/06/ff_gamed
 - Bell, David; Choi, Joenghye; & Lodish, Leonard, "What Matters Most in Internet Retailing," *MIT Sloan Management Review*, 18 September 2012, <http://sloanreview.mit.edu/article/what-matters-most-in-internet-retailing/>
 - Laseter, Timothy, et al, "3 Critical Issues in Internet Retailing," *MIT Sloan Management Review*, 1 April 2007, <http://sloanreview.mit.edu/article/critical-issues-in-internet-retailing/>
 - Dean, Brian, "How to Create a Page That Converts at 21.7% (Step-By-Step Case Study)," *Backlinko*, 5 June 2014, <http://backlinko.com/social-squeeze-page>

Part III: Analysis

Class 9, July 21: Testing + Analyzing

- Segmentation according to usage statistics
- A/B testing
- Statistics that matter: bounce rate, conversions
- Business Goals and Gap Analysis
- Reading:
 - Christian, Brian, "The A/B Test: Inside the Technology That's Changing the Rules of Business," *Wired*, 25 April 2012, http://www.wired.com/business/2012/04/ff_abtesting
 - Shannak, Rifat & Qasrawri, Nada, "Using Web Analytics to Measure the Effectiveness of Online Advertising Media," *European Journal of Economics, Finance and Administrative Sciences*, December 2011 (on Blackboard)

Class 10, July 28: Conducting Audits

- Site audit requirements
 - establishing qualitative criteria
 - KPI's
 - reporting
 - rolling audits
- Reading:
 - Weill, Peter & Woerner, Stephanie, "Optimizing Your Digital Business Review," *MIT Sloan Management Review*, 19 March 2013, <http://sloanreview.mit.edu/article/optimizing-your-digital-business-model/>

Classes 11 & 12, August 4 & 11: Presenting the Work

- Group website plans
- Assignment: Website Plan due August 11