

CMGT 528: WEB DESIGNS FOR ORGANIZATIONS

FALL 2015

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

Class Time: Thursdays, 6:30-9:20 pm, August 27-December 10, 2015

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 now plan, direct, and manage websites to *perform* as well as inform: reducing organizational costs, improving customer service, and contributing to bottom-line goals.

In this course, you 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 content 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.

Learning 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 personal site.

About the Instructor

Freddy J. Nager has over 20 years of experience in online marketing. 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 for Toyota USA. Freddy has also worked on sites for Nissan/Infiniti, the National Lampoon, and numerous startups. He currently runs the marketing company Atomic Tango LLC. A second-generation Trojan, Freddy received his MBA from the USC Marshall School of Business and his BA from Harvard.

Grading Scale + Course Standards

A	95.0% or higher (extremely rare)
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%
D	60.0%-69.9%
F	59.9% or lower

A's and A-minuses must be earned by "going the extra mile" to develop professional work that could be presented to a client or CEO. A-level work is mistake-free; reflects in-depth research; shows creativity and superlative communications skills; and demonstrates a strong understanding of the theories, frameworks, and strategies from the lectures and readings. Personal recommendations will be provided on request to students who earn an A.

- **Attendance:** You must attend every class, arrive on time, and stay for the entire class (missing more than 10 minutes counts as a half absence). Makeup assignments will be given for any absences. Should you need to miss a class, notify the instructor in advance (except, of course, in the case of illness or emergencies), and obtain what you missed from classmates and Blackboard. Two absences will result in complete loss of participation points. More than two absences will result in a course grade of C- or lower.
- **Critical Thinking:** In communications 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. Your assignments must demonstrate critical thinking that describes "why" and "how," not just "what," and will be evaluated on the quality of your reasoning and your integration of lessons from the reading, class discussions, and supplementary research.
- **Professional Writing:** Since this a graduate program in communications, **your writing and formatting will be factored into all assignment grades**, 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:** Treat classmates and speakers with courtesy. You may certainly question and criticize ideas — that is encouraged in the learning environment — but never criticize the person. Also, *be present*: **all phones must be turned off during class — no exceptions — and computers may be used only for taking notes and referencing**. Any use of phones or use of computers for non-class purposes will result in you being marked "absent." You may eat in class, but not eat while guest speakers are speaking.
- **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, with substantial penalties, including a "0" for the assignment and 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.
- **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 ability to think critically and apply research, theories, and frameworks. All papers 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.

- **Class participation (20%):** 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 in class or using computers for non-class-related purposes 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?
- **Article Summaries (10%):** While you're responsible for all readings, you will also be assigned specific articles and textbook chapters to summarize, evaluate, and apply to real world examples. You will then post your summaries on Blackboard for the benefit of your classmates.
- **Individual Website Evaluation (10%), due September 3:** For your first paper, you will critically analyze the website of any B-Corporation (at bcorporation.net) on the basis of the 3B's:
 - **Brand:** How does the website support the organization's image, reputation, and distinctiveness?
 - **Buzz:** How does the website promote "word of mouth" and press coverage?
 - **Behavior:** How does the website encourage and facilitate desired actions from users?Length: 500-1000 words (approximately 1-2 pages). Note: This first assignment will be reviewed and graded, then returned to you for revisions. The purpose is to improve your writing skills and clarify expectations for the semester. Revised papers are not guaranteed to receive a grade increase.
- **Website Plan (3 parts):** You will form teams to develop a complete plan for a new blog-based website, which you will then fully develop. This plan consists of three parts:
 - **Individual Stakeholders Analysis (20%), due September 24:** Each member of the team will research 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: 1000-2000 words (approximately 2-4 pages).
 - **Team Website Plan (20%), due November 5:** Based on the Stakeholders Analyses, your team will collaborate to create specific directions for a brand bible (design and voice); a sitemap of all content pages; a wireframe; SEO (keywords, backlink strategy, usage guides); conversion goals and KPI's. You must support your decisions with references to course readings and additional sources. Length: 3000-5000 words (approximately 6-10 pages).
 - **Team Blog (20%), due December 3:** To simulate a group-managed professional site, all team members will collaborate in creating a WordPress blog based on your plan. Each student will write and keyword-optimize at least two blogposts (approximately 500 words each).

Readings

Textbooks:

- Hinton, Andrew, Understanding Context: Environment, Language, And Information Architecture, 2015 O'Reilly Media.
- Krug, Steve, Don't Make Me Think (Revisited): A Common Sense Approach To Web And Mobile Usability, 2015, New Riders.

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>
- Kumar, Vineet, "Making 'Freemium' Work," *Harvard Business Review*, May 2014, <https://hbr.org/2014/05/making-freemium-work/>
- 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/>
- McNeil, Patrick, "Print to Web Series: The One-Page Site = The New Poster?" *How Magazine*, 14 February 2013, <http://www.howdesign.com/design-creativity/one-page-web-design-new-poster/>
- 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

This calendar is tentative, and will likely change depending on the pace of class discussions, and the availability of guest speakers. Final schedules will be announced in class and in the lecture slides.

Part I: Planning

Class 1, August 27: Defining Content Strategy + The Role of Professional Strategist

- What is website content strategy, why it's important, and how it's evolved
- Goals, 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:
 - Altimeter Group, "Content: The New Marketing Equation," 2012 (on Blackboard)
- Assignment 1: Website Evaluation, due before class on September 3

Class 2, September 3: 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
- Goal setting based on stakeholder requirements
- Regulations: from privacy to accessibility
- Readings for next week
 - Krug, Don't Make Me Think (complete by September 17)
 - 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/>
- Website Evaluation due
- Assignment: Stakeholders Analysis due before class September 24

Classes 3+4, September 10+17: Content Planning

- CMS platforms
- The Purchasing Funnel
- Mobile browser issues
- 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 1 (Chapters 1-3) — discuss on Blackboard

Part II: Development

Class 5, September 24: Developing Content Substance

- Creative Direction
 - developing the style guide
 - voice and tone
 - globalization vs localization
 - imagery and design
- Innovation Tactics
- Readings for next week:
 - Understanding Context, Part 2 (Chapters 4-7) — 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*)
 - McNeil, Patrick, "Print to Web Series: The One-Page Site = The New Poster?" How Magazine, 14 February 2013, <http://www.howdesign.com/design-creativity/one-page-web-design-new-poster/>
- Stakeholders Analysis due
- Assignment: Website Plan due before class November 5

Class 6, October 1: 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:
 - Understanding Context, Part 3 (Chapters 8-11) — discuss on Blackboard
 - 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>
 - Lambert, Craig, "The Way of the Blockbuster," Harvard Magazine, January-February 2014, <http://harvardmagazine.com/2014/01/the-way-of-the-blockbuster>

Class 7, October 8: Blogging

- Blogging
 - personalizing the corporation
 - demonstrating expertise
 - blog promotion
- Social media's role in content strategy:
 - sharing
 - sign-ins

- Press Releases
- Reading:
 - Understanding Context, Part 4 (Chapters 12-14) — discuss on Blackboard by October 15
 - 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>
 - 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>

Classes 8+9, October 15+22: Generating Revenue + Ecommerce

- Content strategy for ecommerce sites
 - cross-selling/upselling
 - customer-relationship management (CRM)
- DIY vs outsourcing (Amazon)
- Affiliate Programs
- Reading:
 - Understanding Context, Part 5 (Chapters 15-18) — discuss on Blackboard by October 22
 - Understanding Context, Part 6 (Chapters 19-21) — discuss on Blackboard by October 28
 - 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>
 - Kumar, Vineet, "Making 'Freemium' Work," Harvard Business Review, May 2014, <https://hbr.org/2014/05/making-freemium-work/>

Part III: Governance + Analysis

Classes 10+11, October 29+November 5: Conducting Analytics + Auditing

- Segmentation according to usage statistics
- A/B testing
- Statistics that matter: KPI's, bounce rate, conversions
- Site audit requirements (qualitative criteria)
- 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)
 - 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/>
- Website Plan due November 5

Class 12, November 12: Establishing Governance and Workflow

- Editorial calendars and page tables
 - page objective and key messages
 - content sourcing
 - phases of development and maintenance
 - content ownership, approvals

Classes 13-14, November 19+December 3

- Catch-up classes to account for guest speakers
- Blog to be posted on Blackboard December 3

Class 15, December 10: Presenting the Work

- Group blog presentations