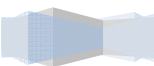
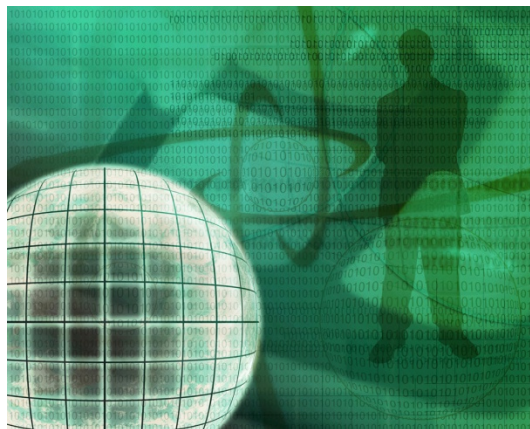


Final Paper

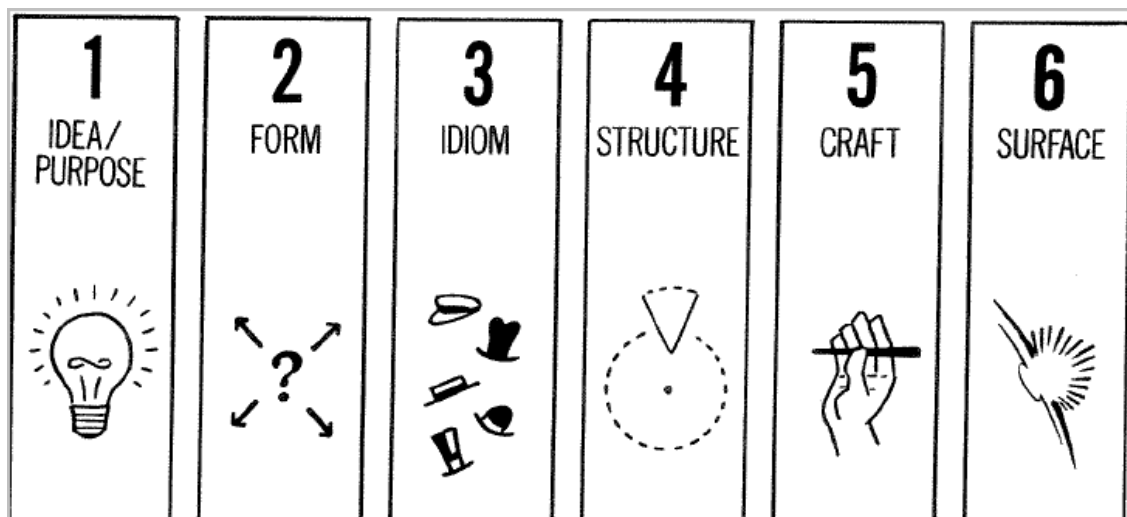
CEP 817 - Learning Technology by Design

By M. Tamara Lindemann

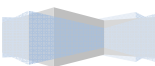


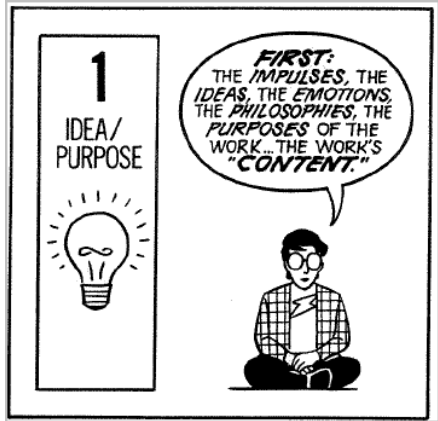
This particular class, Learning Technology by Design, was very interesting and exciting to learn about. It was a little different at first because all of my online courses had been through Angel. This class was structured around its own website which was different. At first, it was frustrating not knowing where to go to find information, grades and assignments and stay in touch with others in the class. By the time Module 2 was complete, it was very comfortable.

Starting out the course by introducing McCloud's theory of the Six Steps was fundamental in establishing a good base line for the design structure for my website. It is very much like the structure for project management planning. McCloud's Six Steps (below) were simple, easy to remember and flowed well in the thought of design.



I thought long and hard about what I wanted to design in this class since I am currently not in a direct teaching environment. Since my day to day environment is working with customers from a real estate perspective and essentially I am teaching them, the decision to create an educational resource website for my clients was evident.

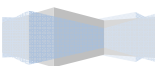


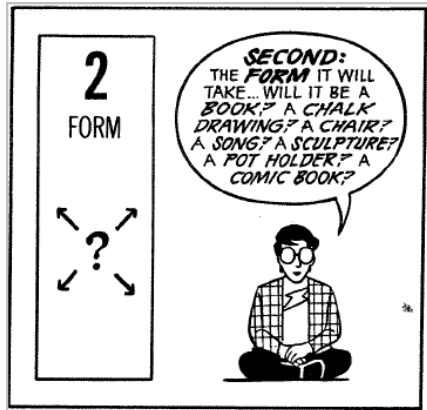


The Idea or Purpose was essential to identify early on because everything from this point would be built upon this. Not having any experience in building a website and since I currently do not teach classes, etc. the thought process was to develop a basic educational real estate website that would be formatted in a logical way, where buyers and sellers could go to find out more about real estate.

McCloud discusses the philosophies and emotions behind the purpose of the content, so I evaluated other agents' personal sites and talked with them about how and why they developed their site the way they did. It provided good insight as some would update the site with only things that were impacting them at the time from current transactions, others would put information strictly on their listings and some were developed on only a specific topic such as foreclosures, etc. I wanted my website to be more than that and educational on a variety of levels for my clients. So thinking about McCloud's theory of reviewing the emotions and philosophies of the content, I called some of my clients to ask what they would like to see and was passionate about in learning regarding real estate from both the buyer and seller perspective.

Compiling a list of important client topics was fundamental in the websites content. In the future, I may send a survey to my clients for feedback on additional topics of interest.

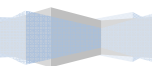


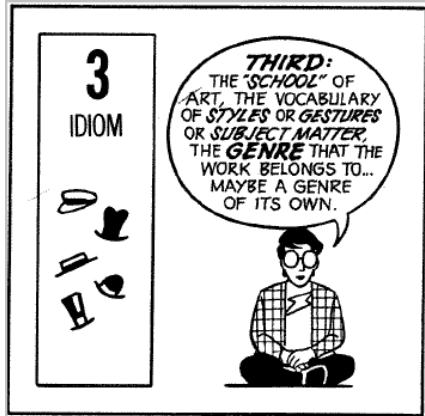


Upon identifying the purpose of the website, it was determined that the site would need to be set up in a logical order to make it user friendly for a variety of clients to be able find and locate topic information. Since the audience could be of a variety of different knowledge levels, the decision was made to put the topics in an alphabetical format on the menu bar.

The content brainstorming process began. Many notes were made about what the content could or should include based on client feedback. It was important not to lose sight of the real purpose of the website, an educational resource for clients. As part of the interview process, questions were ask on what types of topics clients like to see and what would they find value in that they were not finding on other websites. A list was collected, broken down by category and prioritized by common requests and importance.

Comments received from client feedback were that they would like to see a website that has information on topics such as: Advantages of Homeownership, Buyer Checklist, Tips, Foreclosures, Short Sales, Mortgage Calculator, etc. Clients also wanted to have educational video segments that were relevant to current real estate activities.

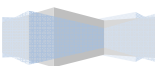




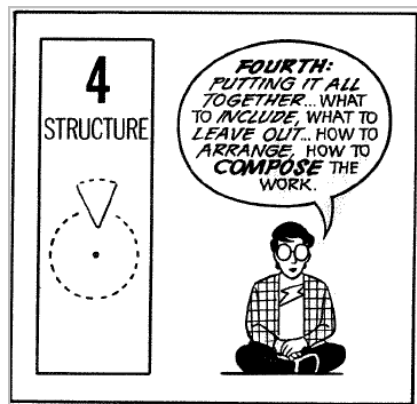
One thing that seemed to really be of great value for this section was the Good and Bed Designs forums. Being able to see other designs from all avenues in products and services and their functionality or lack of functionality was eye opening. In today's face paced world, people seem to be stagnant in their every day awareness and taking the time to really become alert or aware of things that are outside of their everyday environment. Hearing the voices of classmates and seeing the design examples they found was very interesting and it really brought awareness to the forefront for me when it came to design and usability.

The emphasis of my website is obviously real estate. The background choice was difficult; nothing seemed to fit with real estate. So I chose the water background. The thought here was that maybe the user would subconsciously relate the water drops and stars to having shelter from rain and being able to look out the window at night and see the stars. I really wanted to change the background color to be more in the blue/aqua color family but was not able to figure out how to change the color contrast for the background. And due to learner types, it was imperative to have a variety of learning methods including: text content, podcasts, videos, PowerPoint Presentation, interactive gadgets, and links to other sites. Consistency in font color and type were important for the site as well. Too many variances in font color and type would make it hard for the user to transition from page to page.

The article on The Ten Fundamentals of Web Design one statement that jumped out at me was "every screen, every page, every content theme you put on your site must be a self-exemplifying statement of who you are, the quality of your work, what you believe, and it must



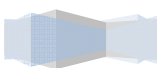
constantly remind readers of the depth and breadth of who you are as an enterprise.” I have strived to achieve this in my site but realize I have a long ways to go. There is no doubt that with more extensive website design experience, this can be achieved. I found it to be a disadvantage of having very limited to no website design experience. Google Sites is a user friendly tool that really helped me in this process. There is still so much to learn and I am very excited about the opportunities.

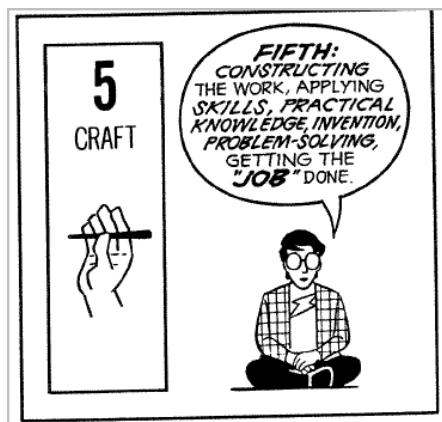


The goal was to add content based on client feedback and want, and have the site consist of the basic informational tools and resources for inexperienced buyers and sellers that would provide them with enough insight to be more educated to make a decision regarding their personal real estate goals and needs.

Topics chosen for the site were of a basic nature to provide an overview of basic and common real estate topics. There is so much information and great resources available online for the topic of real estate. It was important to keep the content somewhat general due to the audience. I researched a variety of websites regarding the content of my site. The National Association of Realtors site was very helpful and just has tons and tons of real estate related topics that could be integrated.

At first, the content was arranged in the order of Buyer, Seller and Other. But then I realized that regardless of whether it was a buyer or a seller, the content topics really could apply to either. So I decided to take a more logical approach to the design layout and place the topics in alphabetical order. This allows any user to be able to quickly and easily find and access the information without having to search the site.

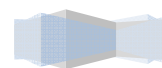




Initially constructing and setting up the site was a super challenge because I struggled with it being available for others to view and use. After several attempts in creating the account and site in Google Sites, the sites had to be deleted and started again from scratch.

So I decided to just develop each section in Word or PowerPoint initially and then copied over to the website. It was easier to create the content in Word, etc. due to being more familiar with formatting, structuring and saving data. Once the material was created and saved, the webpage was created on the site and the material was copied into the page. This worked very well for the most part. I did experience an issue with the Facing Foreclosure section. This section was created in the page layout of landscape and when it was transferred to the site, the site would not accommodate the landscape version when the web page was opened. I worked on this at great length to try and change it but was not able to. It will now open a new page in landscape if the user clicks on it.

The structure of the site was more difficult for me to set in motion as far as design due to the variety of audience expected. Going forward as content is added, I will go back to sections based on the expected audience. It will be beneficial to add a section pertaining to Buyers, Sellers, Tips, Financing, etc. The sections would still appear in an alphabetical format for ease of use. However, based on the Web Style Guide – Document Order section talking about that many search engines give a greater weight to content that appears at the top of the document, the order of topics will need to be carefully and strategically placed once more content is added to the site.



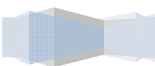
I downloaded and played around with a trial version of Camtasia Studio 6 and it offers many great e-learning options. It was only a 30 day trial and is expensive, but I definitely see where it would be beneficial to develop a self directed real estate exercise to add to the website at a later date.



As I entered the last step of developing my website, I ask myself, “What is the value of this site?” After carefully reviewing my choices for content, it was evident that this site will be a great tool and resources for home buyers, especially first time home buyers. It contains some great very basic real estate related information that will be helpful to anyone interested in real estate.

As part of the testing phase, feedback was solicited from past and current real estate clients both buyers and sellers, classmates, colleagues, friends and family. The website link was sent to 38 people that I ask for feedback. During the whole class, there were two people outside of the class that I continually sought feedback from and evaluated their suggestions throughout the development phase. Based on user feedback, there are a few things that I would change or do differently. Some of them being:

- Move the Real Estate links closer to the top of the side bar
- Figure out how to change the background color to a blue/aqua
- As more topics are added, create sections for material based on content, i.e. Buyers, Sellers, Financing, etc.



- Re-structure the Facing Foreclosure section so it appears in a portrait view vs. landscape view.
- Add additional relevant online resources as needed
- Create a client question and answer area that is interactive. Although I have no idea how to do this, it would be a great tool.

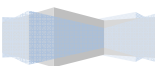
Summary

I found this course to be extremely beneficial from a design perspective. I have learned so much about design and realize there is so much more to learn. It has reinforced my belief in websites being consistent, logically organized, user-friendly, interactive, visual aesthetic and containing valid content that is relevant to the intended user audience.

Formulating teams in the beginning of the course was a great idea and my group, Patrick and Petra were great to work with. We all seemed to work well together and we provided consistent constructive feedback to one another throughout the course.

Some of the challenges during this course were not having the experience using Google Sites or Google Docs. It was fun to learn new programs but without instruction and support, it sometimes was frustrating trying to learn it on my own. I was able to team up with Susan for a while at the beginning and we assisted each other with learning how to set up the side bar and basic layout structure.

Overall, this course was very valuable and I feel that it has assisted me in the effort to grow and market my business as a Realtor. My goal for developing this website was to make it real, not just an assignment, and I feel that my clients will see value in using the site. Moving forward, the goal is to continue adding relevant content and continue to learn more about



designing websites and re-structuring pages. I just want to thank you, Punya and Kristen for all the knowledge you have taught me in this course.

