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DUMMIES®

3RD EDITION

Web Design FOR **DUMMIES®** 3RD EDITION

by Lisa Lopuck



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John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Web Design For Dummies®, 3rd Edition

Published by
John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
111 River Street
Hoboken, NJ 07030-5774
www.wiley.com

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Published by John Wiley & Sons, Inc., Hoboken, New Jersey

Published simultaneously in Canada

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Library of Congress Control Number: 2012935199

ISBN: 978-1-118-00490-6 (pbk); ISBN 978-1-118-22174-7 (ebk); ISBN 978-1-118-23554-6 (ebk); ISBN 978-1-118-26039-5 (ebk)

Manufactured in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1



About the Author

Lisa Lopuck is an experienced digital creative executive with over 20 years building, inspiring, and leading creative teams; managing vendors; overseeing digital department and project budgets, brand identity, packaging, and point-of-sale design; and guiding innovation and best practices for web, mobile, social media, and e-commerce projects.

In 1988, Lisa got her first glimpse of multimedia while still at UCLA pursuing her degree in design. She saw a tiny, black-and-white, interactive HyperCard stack designed by The Voyager Company and immediately knew her career path. Her first job out of school was working at the Apple Multimedia Lab in San Francisco. She then moved on to Skywalker Ranch, working with George Lucas to design educational CD-ROMs. The rest has been interactive history — working with everyone from eBay to Disney, and speaking at conferences all over the world.

She most recently served as Vice President of Creative and Digital Media for Monster Energy, where she led the redesign and launch of their global website, e-commerce technology platform, and mobile applications. Under her leadership, Monster's Facebook brand page exploded from 500 thousand to over 12 million fans in just 1.5 years. Prior to Monster, she also designed several Disney e-commerce websites, including DisneyShopping.com (later folded into DisneyStore.com), and many of the Disney theme-park websites, including HongKongDisneyland.com and DisneyCruiseLine.com.

She currently is the co-founder of Front Row www.frontrow-studios.com, a digital marketing agency exclusively focused on the sports industry. She's an avid athlete herself (tournament tennis player) and resides in Southern California.

Dedication

For my husband, Matt, who is my chief evangelist, and for our daughter, Jasmine, who is turning out to be quite the talented writer and artist herself.

For my parents who always encouraged me to reach for the stars.

Author's Acknowledgments

I would like to give a big thanks to the many people who helped make this the best *Web Design For Dummies* edition yet in the series (funny how they are all men!): A huge thank-you to Aaron and his incredible team at Ekko Media Group, who know how to rise to any occasion and get things done — including providing great technical input for this book. Thank you, Paul, my editor, for keeping me on track. Special props to my crew at Monster Energy: LeRoy, Ryan, Chris, Eric, and Pete who do more amazing work with less than seems humanly possible for such a big ship to run. I know you guys will go far. And lastly, I'd like to acknowledge my current business partners in Front Row, Martin and Don, two of the most talented people I've had the pleasure of working with, for their support in the development of this excellent edition.

Publisher's Acknowledgments

We're proud of this book; please send us your comments at <http://dummies.custhelp.com>. For other comments, please contact our Customer Care Department within the U.S. at 877-762-2974, outside the U.S. at 317-572-3993, or fax 317-572-4002.

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Introduction

Designing professional websites 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 what it takes 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 website 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 websites for real-world clients — clients ranging from Fortune 100 companies to start-ups that need high-powered websites to function as an integral part of their global 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 website
- ✓ Present web work to clients — even internal clients
- ✓ Turn an outline of your content and a list of requirements into an information-design strategy
- ✓ Create wireframe diagrams to plan each unique page layout and interaction design
- ✓ Craft visual-design strategies that enhance usability and create a unique brand statement

- ✓ 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 WebSpeak icon. (See the section "Icons Used in This Book," later in this Introduction.)

Code listings are set in a monospaced font like this: `<style type="text/css">`. 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 either in the business of designing professional websites or managing the production of major websites. Whether you are a project or account manager looking to understand the creative and production process, a businessperson in need of a website, or a programmer 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, the design process for graphics and user interfaces, and the technologies needed to start your journey into designing and building professional websites. 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, efficient websites.

What You Shouldn't Read

Whatever you do, don't let the techy stuff in this book lead you astray. Throughout this book, and especially in the later chapters, I include some technical examples and explain the basics of how they work. As a web designer or manager of a web project, you don't have to be a 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 intimidating.



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 for our purposes in this book. After all, this book is geared toward creative and marketing professionals looking to apply their skills to designing websites, not building laser-guided satellites.

How This Book Is Organized

This book is organized to follow the basic workflow of a major website 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 technobabble you need to understand, and finally, Part V sums everything up in a handy reference guide. Allow me to break it down . . .

Part 1: The Web Design Kick-Off

Professional website design involves a lot of interconnected tasks. To be a successful web designer or to manage a web-design project, 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-development team, 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 website, 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 a design works before you invest a lot of time in final production.

Part III: Designing Web Graphics

Designing the actual graphics for a website 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 stuff that you need to know. I also show you graphic production techniques and tips for preparing client presentations.

Part IV: Producing the Final Website

After you determine the graphic and user-interface design, the real work begins — assembling the designs into a working website. 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, as well as an introduction to Cascading Style Sheets, or CSS. Chapter 15 takes you a little further along the website-production road and illuminates the technologies that really turn websites into living, breathing business machines (which is scary in a *good* way).

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 technobabble. 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 you can choose to ignore it guilt-free. I won't blame you.



The web-design and development process 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 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 website 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, find me online at [Facebook.com/WebDesignForDummies](https://www.facebook.com/WebDesignForDummies).

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Part I

The Web Design Kick-Off

The 5th Wave

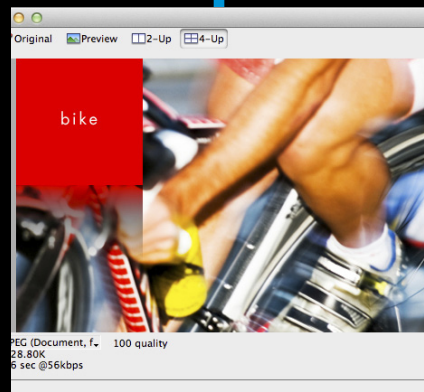
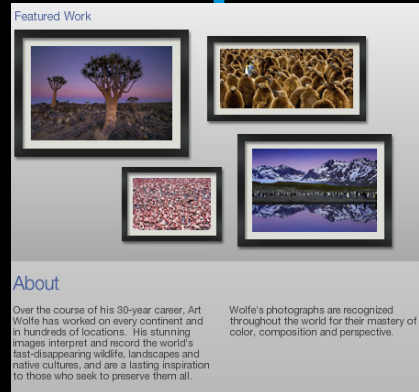
By Rich Tennant



"Games are an important part of my Web site. They cause eye strain."

Professional website production involves a lot of complex, interdependent tasks and requires an experienced team of people to get everything done. As you embark on your adventures in web design and/or web management, a good first step is to understand this production process from start to finish — and the people involved — so you have a holistic picture of what to expect and know where you fit in along the way. In fact, even though many design firms tout their mastery of the web-production process as a selling point when they're trying to win bids, the truth is that most firms follow the same or similar process: Define, Design, Develop, Deploy. The client then gets to handle "Phase Five" — Maintenance!

In Chapter 1, I introduce you to the different types of roles and responsibilities associated with the web-production process. In Chapter 2, I take you through the whole production process, showing how design agencies and in-house design teams manage Web projects from start to finish.





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So You're Designing a Website

In This Chapter

- ▶ Understanding team members' roles and responsibilities
- ▶ Getting started on your web-design career

The digital industry has been exploding since its inception — from websites to mobile applications and social media, the opportunities are endless. This is great news for you if you're thinking about becoming a professional web designer. The industry is ever-changing and evolving — and exciting, rapid developments are around every corner.

Web design is not just about creating a series of pages that looks good. In this book, I show you how to design a cohesive site that links its parts together in a way that delivers on business goals and makes sense to the user. Modern websites can consist of hundreds of pages. As a professional web designer or manager, your job is to know how to integrate design and navigation using a myriad of technologies and techniques to build an effective site.

While building a professional-grade website may seem like a daunting task, if you understand the process from start to finish and the roles of the people involved, you'll be on better footing to get started.

In this chapter, I introduce you to the different players that you'll surround yourself with on your journey through professional web design.



The People Involved

Designing websites is such a huge undertaking that to do it right, you really need a *team* of people — whether working with an internal team, with vendors, or independent consultants. Here is a sampling of the major players, their roles, and when you need them.

Business folks and clients

In the early days, you could get away with sticking a website up on the Internet and expect to get reasonable traffic without much further effort. In the crowded Internet highways of today, however, you really need a business strategy and a marketing plan. The business and marketing folks, whether internal or your client, must be involved with the website from the very beginning. They are in charge of the following responsibilities:

- ✓ **Setting the goals and requirements for the site.** You must always understand the business goals, in order of priority, of the site. For example, the number one goal may be to sell product. The business people not only provide the top three-or-so goals to set the site's direction but will also need to provide a list of site *requirements* — essentially a wish list of the site's capabilities — its “ability to do X.”
- ✓ **Identifying the target customer.** The marketing team members are the ones that are closest to a business's end consumer. They should provide a profile picture of the ideal customer that the site must cater to. The “information architects” (discussed later in this chapter, these are people who design a site's underlying structure) on the team will use this data to develop a set of “personas” that will focus the creative team's efforts throughout the web development process.
- ✓ **Reeling in the visitors.** The marketing team also needs to figure out how to direct customers to the site. In the Internet business, *getting eyeballs* (attracting people to your site) is not as easy as it sounds; it involves search engine optimization (SEO), partnering with other companies, and developing an integrated online and offline strategy. For these reasons, the marketing folks need to get started on their plan right away.



Producers and project managers

Once clients and companies are committed to a new web project, invariably their eyes tend to get bigger than the budget. Often times, they will ask for the moon because they simply do not understand the complexities that go into web development. Among many other responsibilities, the main job of the *producer* or *project manager* is to set and manage client expectations so