



■ DATING EXAMPLE FOR INFORMATION ARCHITECTURE ■

ABSTRACT

This paper provides the documented explanations of our submitted poster to CHI 2003 about the process of Information Architecture (IA). The general theme of CHI 2003 was to deliver an innovative way of presenting IA in order to better the IA community through a given theme or use of a metaphor. Our poster, IA Dating Example for Information Architecture, explains how IA is related to everyone's daily lives. In this document, we describe the similarities of IA in the web field and in dating in each step of the IA process.

KEYWORDS

Dating, Information Architecture, IA, Student Posters, Conference Posters, Conference submissions, CHI 2003, Ray Henderson, TaRan Wilson, Miyuki Shimbo, Multimedia and Web Design, The Art Institute of Atlanta.

INTRODUCTION

The information architecture document is essential to the development of a website that enables the audience to find the necessary information. Because websites are interactive communication products, all content has to consider the flow of information. Without knowing how an audience thinks, good websites cannot be developed. We found that there are several similarities between IA and dating. Dating is accomplished by communication. One also needs to consider the requirement and competitive analysis, audience definitions, user scenarios, process flows, and site maps when broaching the subject of dating. Every step can be represented in dating. Without analyzing how other people achieve their goals, one may not be able to achieve his/her goals.

REQUIREMENT ANALYSIS

When beginning the information architecture process, one must take into account the most important parts of a healthy IA document, the requirement analysis. Normally this step is divided into four parts: business requirements, user requirements, design requirements, and technical requirements [1]. These requirements help to create a website that the potential audience will want to use. In order to be successful in the web development field, it is essential to define the goals and requirements that will allow a website to rise above the more common design and usability oriented mistakes in the web community. Similarly, dating also needs a requirements

analysis. Business requirements are to be happy by having a partner. Design requirements are related to a partner's height, hair color and personal appearance. Technical requirements are related to partner's personality, such as outgoing or shy. By going through this step in dating, one helps one's self to produce a strategy that will help lead them to achieve their needs and wants without any unnecessary set-backs which can result in a loss of valuable time and effort.

COMPETITIVE ANALYSIS

After defining the goals and the strategies in the previous two steps, one will need to determine just whom it is they will be aiming to appeal to through producing the intended site. All of this is decided upon in the audience definition. By defining a primary and secondary target audience, a company will be able to estimate to whom its mainstream users will be [1]. The target audiences' computer skills and environment will be also considered. Likewise in dating, one is able to determine who might be best suited to be a partner. Because the playing field is wide and varied, it is often better to single out favorite personality types. In doing such, one is able to determine what a specific person may need or want, as well as satisfy their own wants and needs according to their capabilities of providing a positive dating experience.

AUDIENCE DEFINITION

After defining the goals and the strategies in the previous two steps, one will need to determine just whom it is they will be aiming to appeal to through producing the intended site. Well, all of this is decided upon in the audience definition. By defining a primary target audience and secondary target audience, a company will be able to estimate whom its mainstream users will be [1]. The target audience's computer skills and environment will be also considered. Likewise in dating, one is able to determine who might be best suited to be a partner. Because the playing field is wide and varied, it is often better to single out favorite personality types. In doing such, one is able to determine what a specific person may need or want, as well as satisfy their own wants and needs according to their capabilities of providing a positive dating experience.

USER SCENARIOS

User scenarios are story-like paragraphs that describe users' possible thoughts. The user scenarios are developed based on their user personas, which define a user's general information (such as gender and age). By developing user scenarios, web developers will be able to identify how the user will interact with the system [1]. In dating, the user scenario is the step that one may

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experience on a date with that particular future partner. By going through this step, one will be able to think what a potential partner is expecting in another. User scenarios help to improve navigability in the world. The secret to success in dating is improved in this step and can help to lead one to their goals.

CONTENT SURVEY

After specific user scenarios are developed, it is time to define what content is needed and the status of that content. This step is called content survey. Content survey is a high level review of core site pages taken at the beginning of a project [1]. Surveys help to understand the scope and nature of the material. Web developers will learn what the primary content is through this process. The content survey in dating will also include the materials, or tools, that can help them to attract their future partner. The materials must be chosen carefully based on the user scenario. It is the key to choose the right item that the potential partner wants. The items may include flowers, candy, perfume and so on. By defining the appropriate materials or tools for a date, one will have a greater chance at having a very successful date.

PROCESS FLOW

After developing a content survey, the next step is to develop a process flow that graphically shows each of the steps in how the users behave. Process flows are developed based on the previously mentioned user scenarios. Process flows outline the interaction between the systems and how they illustrate both the front and back end experiences [1]. By developing process flows web developers will be able to identify the actual and ideal paths that a user will take (this aids in the development of the site). Likewise in dating, process flows play an important role. One must make several dating plans and analyze how potential partners may behave. For example, even though one likes to go to monster truck shows, the potential partner may be expecting to have a romantic date rather than a noisy show. As a result, the partner will be upset at how he/she was treated. In order to avoid making a potential partner upset, one must take a potential partner's personality and hobbies into account.

SITE MAP

The site map is a visual aid to show how the site is structured. It helps users find the information that they are looking for on the web. It tells users how many pages there will be and also what pages link together. The other important aspect of site map is that it is another method to navigate through the site [1]. In dating, the site map also allows one to view all possible paths that the potential partner might take rather than just the paths that he/she is most likely to travel. By

developing a site map, one can step back and ensure as a third person that there are no problems

WIREFRAMES

Now that we have developed a site map, it is the time to develop the skeleton for the individual pages of the site. This process is referred to as producing wireframes. Wireframes are low tech and do not display the visual look and feel of the site [1]. It focuses on the hierarchy of the content on a page. Therefore, it is possible for web developers and users to focus on the navigation system. Through wireframes users will be able to understand a site concept quickly and react to content placement and rendering. In dating, wireframes are actual plans on how to spend time with a partner and how they are laid out at a specific place, such as a movie theater. For instance, if one wants to go to a movie, one must think of where to sit. A couple wants to sit next each other and to have the best view of the screen. In order to accomplish this, one needs to make a date plan so that they can make the best use of their time to ensure that it is enjoyable.

CONCLUSION

Now that the steps in information architecture are complete, we are ready to pass the IA document to the designers who will develop a visual layout based on this document. The document will also be passed to technical engineers who will develop coding to give life to the site. Technical engineers will decide what kind of technical and functional requirements are used through this document. Thus, the IA document will be followed as the guideline to develop an effective and user-friendly website throughout the project's lifecycle. The IA document will also be used as a guide to test the usability. Like web production, dating will use IA to design and decorate one's life with their newfound partner. One will make the best use of the benefits from IA, such as saving money and gaining more positive dating experience and so on. Having used the document to gain superiority over their competitors, one will gain an increased level of success and perhaps gain the ability to live happily ever after.

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REFERENCES

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