

Reflections and wrap-up

Relationship with client/mother:

The potential pitfall of this project was the fact that my client also is my mother. This ended up being one of the most rewarding aspects of this project.

In the beginning I was asked by my advisors if this was such a good idea, my response was, "She will challenge me more than any other client." This was the case. Most clients I have dealt with do not think that anything (or almost anything) is possible. My mother thinks that I can do anything and everything so she continued to push me. The big stretches were that she wanted a site that integrated with her world. In her world she is surrounded by her blackberry which syncs to her outlook which is synced with home and work. She wanted to get her students registration to link with Outlook. In the end we ended up with a way for her to download a spreadsheet which will be importable to outlook.

The other challenge was that I don't always agree with my mothers method of expressing her religious beliefs and this site is all about her religious beliefs. We ended up having fun with this aspect and challenged each other back and forth on many points of content.

Our communication overall went very smoothly. We did end up using email and phone as our main methods of communication. Since we both felt the freedom to be blunt about our ideas and opinions we cut back on a lot of design time typically spent going back and forth. She was very clear and articulate when she didn't like something and/or wanted it changed. This was very helpful.

CSS validation:

CSS is valid except for some properties in regards to plugins. The shopping cart uses thickbox which does not produce valid code, and the cforms form plugin uses "display:-moz-inline-box" to line up 2 span tags next to each other. This is one of the rare Mozilla "bugs"

XHTML validation:

All of the template coding is valid XHTML 1.0 Transitional.

Cross browser testing:

I tested the site in all major browsers (IE 7, IE 8beta, Firefox, Opera, Safari) Everything looks swell. Screenshots can be seen at: <http://glaze0101.com/2008/07/31/cross-browser-testing/>

The decision to not support IE6:

I spent some time thinking about support of IE6 and I decided not to, in fact I am heading this direction in life in general. I feel that as long as web developers continue to support this archaic browser people will feel no need to upgrade. Since the main audience is in Southern California the assumption is that most are already using modern browsers. Also, to support this decision I looked to industry giants 37 signals and Apple (their .mac software is no longer supporting IE6):

37 signals said, " The Internet Explorer 6 browser was released back in 2001, and Internet

Explorer 7, the replacement, was released nearly two years ago in 2006. Modern web browsers such as IE 7, Firefox, and Safari provide significantly better online experiences. Since IE 6 usage has finally dipped below a small minority threshold of our customers, it's time to finally move beyond IE 6. [...]

(<http://37signals.blogs.com/products/2008/07/basecamp-phasin.html>)

Web developer Jeremy Keith said on A List Apart,

“ IE 6 is a last-generation browser. This means that IE 6 can't provide the same web experience that modern browsers can. Continued support of IE 6 means that we can't optimize our interfaces or provide an enhanced customer experience in our apps. Supporting IE 6 means slower progress, less progress, and, in some places, no progress. We want to make sure the experience is the best it can be for the vast majority of our customers, and continuing to support IE 6 holds us back.

Because IE6 stagnated for so many years and because it remained the market leader, a whole generation of websites had emerged that were coded to the quirky but predictable vagaries of that browser. These websites appeared to “work.” That is, they looked fine in the most popular browser on the market. But when IE7 was released, these websites were inevitably rendered differently. IE7, with its improved support for Web Standards, rendered these sites in much the same way as any other standards-compliant browser. Despite a concerted campaign to encourage developers to use conditional comments instead of browser-specific hacks, Microsoft received a barrage of complaints from website owners upset at the way that IE7 had changed the game. This is what the Internet Explorer team are referring to when they talk about “breaking the web.”(<http://www.alistapart.com/articles/theyshootbrowsers>)

This is all to show that my decision was not made lightly and that I am in good company. I have made it so that if people are using IE6 they will get a message recommending to update to a modern browser with options including IE7, Firefox and Opera. I know that this is aggressive but someone has gotta do it and I'm not alone.

Usability:

I wish I would have been more organized here and somehow done testing in Southern California. It would have probably been more useful. That said. The test was very useful and alerted me to a serious issue.

Summary:

This project was a success on all accounts. I feel like I gave my client the best I could and she is extremely happy with the results. I am also looking forward to continuing to work on this site and offer full support and some additional training.