

## Why launch a Local Union website?

- to keep members informed and involved;
- to provide bargaining and mobilization updates;
- to overcome corporate disinformation in organizing campaigns;
- to orchestrate grassroots lobbying efforts; and
- to improve the speed and efficiency of many tasks, from distributing grievance forms to updating membership lists.

## Technical considerations:

Hardware / Software  
Server / costs \$35-\$50

Who will do it?

- Trained Union Officer
- Computer, graphics, html guru
- Someone available to respond to email

Who is your main audience, your broader audience?

## What should go in your website?

News  
General information  
Hot issues – bargaining updates, mobilization, political activity  
Contract information  
Tools - grievance forms  
Links to unions, government, reference, others  
Union organizing information  
Email

## What should NOT go on the web site?

See Union policy - FEC  
Union elections  
Federal endorsements  
Copyright / trademark  
Member permission

## Layout

First, outline what you want on your site.

Sketch out on paper your basic design and share with others to get feedback.

Create a flow chart for easy reference.

Set to fit 640-wide by 480-high dimensions of a typical laptop computer screen, so that the viewer does not have to scroll much beyond the first screen to find linked information. (Standard view is 800x600)

## Graphics

- Use graphics sparingly – smaller for faster uploading. Your image file size should not be larger than 20K, and total images on a page should not be more than 50K.
- Use .jpg for photo format and .gif for other graphic formats.
- Have browser set aside a box sized specifically to the graphic so the rest of the page will upload while waiting for the graphic.
- Busy backgrounds, busy graphics, and visual clutter are distracting



## Design Tips

- easy to navigate
- info easy to find
- attractive
- updated
- accommodates various browsers, pc types

## Publish it

Post in plants

Leaflets

Newsletters

**Inform the Webmaster for your union's national Web site.** If your state AFL-CIO has a Web site, they may also have links to union locals in the state.

Publicize your Web site to the **search engines**. Each search engine has a slightly different process for submitting a new Web site **URL (Uniform Resource Locator — your Web address)**. Many companies advertise that they will submit your Web site to hundreds of search engines for a fee. Don't buy it. You only need to submit to the major search engines. These are:

- **AltaVista**  
<http://addurl.altavista.com/addurl/new>
- **Lycos**  
<http://www.lycos.com/addasite.html>
- **Google**  
<http://www.google.com/addurl.html>
- **Look Smart**  
<http://submit.looksmart.com/info.jhtml>  
*NOTE: Scroll down and follow link for free submission for nonprofit Web sites.*
- **Open Directory Project (AOL)**  
<http://dmoz.org/add.html>
- **Yahoo**  
<http://docs.yahoo.com/info/suggest/>

You will also want to publicize your Web site to some of the **services that alert viewers to new Web sites**, such as

- **Net-happenings**  
<http://www.edu-cyberpg.com/Community/NetHappenings.html>

## **Important:**

**Keep your web site updated regularly.**

**Have an email.**

**Stay on top of email.**



## Hardware:

- a 486 or higher computer PC processor that has a minimum of 64 megabytes (MB) of RAM and runs Windows 98 or higher (or Macintosh equivalent);
- a 56K or faster computer modem, a cable modem, or a direct Internet connection (ISDN, DSL, etc.);
- Internet access through an Internet Service Provider (ISP);
- Web hosting service (available through some ISPs) that offers at least 10 MB of disk space;

## Software:

- **Web browser** such as **Netscape Navigator** or **Communicator** (<http://www.netscape.com>) or **Microsoft Internet Explorer** (<http://www.microsoft.com>).
- **HTML editor**. Many word processing programs such as **Word** and **WordPerfect** allow documents to be saved for the Web in hypertext markup language (.htm or .html). This is good for converting documents from other formats into Web documents. You can modify the HTML codes with a text editor such as **WordPad** or **Notepad**, but if you plan to do a lot of Web publishing, you may want to invest in a more sophisticated HTML editor such as **HomeSite** (<http://www.allaire.com>), **HotDog** (<http://www.sausage.com>), or **FrontPage** (<http://www.microsoft.com>). These programs automate many of the tasks for you and often have other features, such as programs that verify your links. They are reviewed regularly in the major computer publications so you may want to check those reviews before selecting a product. In addition, most offer a free 30-day evaluation copy that you can download from the company's Web site.
- **FTP (file transfer protocol) program**. FTP is the vehicle that gets your Web document from your computer to your server. One of the easiest to use is a shareware program, **WS-FTP**. You can download it at <http://www.ipswitch.com> from the Internet. The limited edition version is free for educational and non-commercial users and is all you will need to move your Web document from your local computer to your Web host server. **Telnet program**. Depending on your Web hosting service and whether or not you want to use **CGI (Common Gateway Interface) programming** on your Web site, you may also need Telnet software to connect directly and give commands to the computer that is hosting your Web site. CGI programming, which is written in computer languages such as Perl or C, is used to create the scripts that make online forms and guestbooks work, for example. There are many telnet programs available. One widely used and free program is **Trumptel**. It can be downloaded at <ftp://papa.indstate.edu/winsoc-1/telnet/trmptel.zip> from the Internet.
- **Graphics software (not required)**. Graphics programs allow you to create and edit your own graphics or further manipulate graphics created by others. The industry leader is **PhotoShop**, but simpler and more inexpensive programs such as **Paint Shop Pro** or **Corel Photo Paint** are available, and are powerful enough for many users. You may also download graphics programs from the Web as shareware or as freeware. (Note: When using graphics created by others, make sure you are not violating any copyright restrictions.)

Macintosh users can consult these two Web sites for information and ratings on the best tools for Web access and development for that operating system:

### Mac on the Net

<http://www.moxienet.com/macnet/>

### Macworld Product Finder

<http://www.macworld.com/>



# General Online Resources for Site Design

Source: CWA website

- Creating Killer Web Sites  
[www.killersites.com](http://www.killersites.com)
- Web Developer's Virtual Library  
[wdvl.internet.com](http://wdvl.internet.com)
- Reallybig.co  
[www.reallybig.com/default.shtml](http://www.reallybig.com/default.shtml)
- How Unions Can Use the Internet  
[www.ilr.cornell.edu/library/reference/GUIDES/tua/default.html](http://www.ilr.cornell.edu/library/reference/GUIDES/tua/default.html)
- WebMonkey  
[www.webmonkey.com](http://www.webmonkey.com)
- Issues Affecting the Design of Web Sites  
[www.december.com/cmcmag/1999/jan/raktab.html](http://www.december.com/cmcmag/1999/jan/raktab.html)
- All About Designing for the Web  
[www.Webdeveloper.com](http://www.Webdeveloper.com)
- The Sevloid Guide to Web Design  
[www.sev.com.au/Webzone](http://www.sev.com.au/Webzone)
- The 5 Golden Rules of Professional Design [www.webmasterbase.com/article/848](http://www.webmasterbase.com/article/848)





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# THE PROCESS OF PLANNING A WEB SITE

## Introduction

Information architecture concerns itself with how you organize your Web site. It involves analysis, planning, page layout and issues of site navigation and usability. This document provides a simple, step by step process and introduction to the basics of information architecture. Even though the steps are listed in chronological order, like all systems that follow the ADDIE model of analysis, design, development, implementation and evaluation, the process is iterative. Changes can be made anywhere in the system; its purpose is to guide you through the process of creating a basic overall and usable design for your Web site projects.

### 1. Evaluate the purpose

The overriding concern for Web site design is what your site is trying to say. It must have a purpose and the clearer you are about that, the more focused your Web site will be. At a minimum, you need to figure out what users want and need from your site. By the same token, you also must consider the needs and desires of the person or organization requesting the site. You might need to spend some time with them to figure out what they want the site to have and do. Make a list and then figure out what you can realistically do, given any and all of your constraints (budget, time, technology).

**Example One:** The purpose of this Web site is to provide college students, enrolled in Section 3 of an Introductory English course, with class handouts and course materials and to inform them about course requirements and policies.

**Example Two:** Water Educational Training (WET) Project. [www.emich.edu/wrc/wet](http://www.emich.edu/wrc/wet). The purpose of this site is to disseminate information about the water environmental education training project and corresponding lesson plans to elementary school teachers and other interested educators who might be interested in implementing a WET program at their school.

### 2. Identify the users of the site

Who are you trying to reach? What do they need? How will they be connecting to your site, on-campus with high speed Internet access or from home? The answers to these kinds of questions will partly determine how you will design your Web site, what features to include, and what you will leave out.

**Possible Characteristics to Consider:** Computer platform, connectivity, browser type, accessibility issues, age, level of education and favorite foods.

### 3. Brainstorm a list of tasks

Users don't want Web sites, they want information. As a web designer, your job is to figure out what should be on the site and provide navigation for users to find it. To help accomplish this, start by identifying all the primary tasks they will perform on your Web site. List each one and make sure your site delivers it. Example tasks: contact information, course schedule information, policies and guidelines, or download lecture notes. There could be many, many more. Recording them provides a list of pages to create and things to include in your site. It also supplies criteria for later judging the usability and usefulness of your site.

**Possible Tasks for Users to Complete on a Site:** Print a map, purchase a product, get driving directions, find policies, locate research findings on a particular topic.

## 4. Refine and organize the list

Create an outline of the site. An outline helps you sort and organize information. It also sets the stage for your first site critique. Outlines show the breadth and depth of information and can also point out issues of redundancy and cross linking. It helps you cluster information, pick out top-level navigation and start to work on descriptive labels.

## 5. Card sort the list (another type of content organizing)

Card sorting is a useful technique for determining how to organize your site, especially if working with information that has several possible organizations. It helps provide insight about how to understand and organize a domain. The optimal number of categories is  $7 \pm 2$ . How to do a card sort with a team or individual:

1. Label a set of index cards with your proposed categories
2. Brief the individual or team
3. Group the cards and label the major categories
4. Record the hierarchy that was created
5. Repeat with more individuals or groups (five is usually sufficient)
6. Combine the results

Although helpful, card sorting has its limitations. People will be making their own judgments about how to organize your information, whether they know the content or not. The initial phrasing of choices and concepts can heavily influence how this is done. Organization can be affected if cards are misinterpreted or if certain categories are omitted from the sort. In addition, user defined labels might not necessarily be very good. Even with its limitations, though, card sorting provides insight into how people naturally organize a given domain and a way to bring consensus among a team.

## 6. Create a navigation flow chart

A navigation flow chart is a picture of your information organization. Each major section of the chart becomes a top-level navigation piece with links to information underneath. Every box in the diagram represents a Web page that needs to be created. The best flow charts show the navigation, but also include a file name for each box, see Appendix A.

Listed below are several basic designs (figures 1.1-1.5), for navigation maps: hierarchical, linear, matrix, arbitrary, and hybrid. They show the ways the pages of the site are linked together and illustrate how the information flows.

### Linear Architecture Design

- Works like a text book
- Ordered sequence
- Good for processes
- Forces users to view things in specific order
- Better organized into a hierarchy for usability
- Example: Filling out an online form, purchasing a product on the web

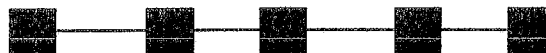


Figure 1.2-Linear Architecture

## Hierarchical Architecture Design

- Most often used design for navigation
- Easiest to implement and follow
- Navigation involves few steps
- Expands easily to fit more data

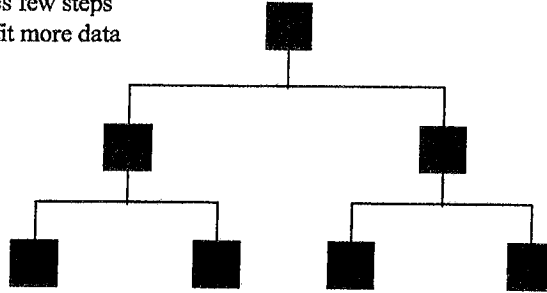


Figure 1.1—Hierarchical Architecture

## Matrix Architecture Design

- Two dimensional organization
- Everything is linked together
- Good for complex information
- Example: Product database

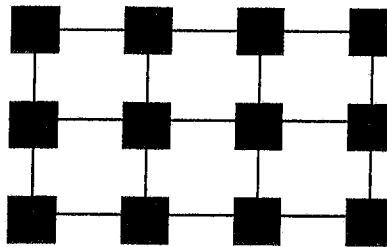


Figure 1.3—Matrix Architecture

## Arbitrary Architecture Design

- No formal structure
- Links seem almost random
- Not easy for beginners to use
- Hard to learn and follow the structure of the site
- Example: WWW

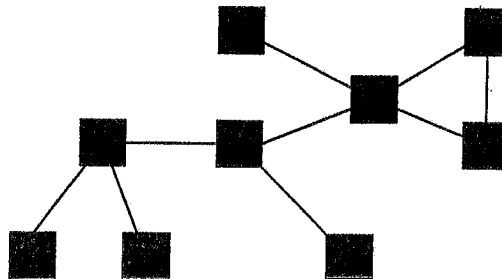


Figure 1.4—Arbitrary Architecture

## Hybrid Architecture Design

- Many sites conform to this design

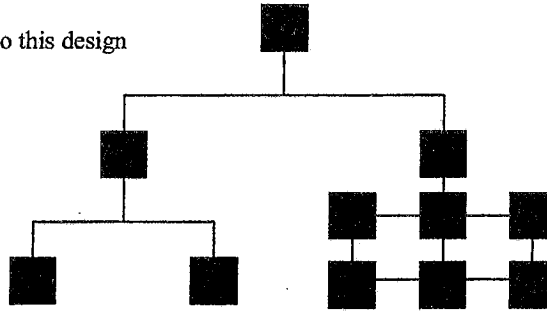


Figure 1.5—Hybrid Architecture

Most people get lost deeper than three levels into a site. Therefore, it makes sense to limit the depth of a site, rather than its breadth; it is a balancing act to keep the Web site usable. In any case, it is generally recommended that seven main links are optimal. This is based on the theory that people can remember in groups of 3 or 4 at a time. For example, a phone number is a set of seven digits: one group of three and another set of four. Any more than seven, and people start to lose their way.

Information flow charts do not have to be absolutely pure. It is okay to create shortcuts that link across a structure. In fact, some information doesn't lend itself to any kind of formal structure. In this case, arbitrary topology might best fit the bill.

### 7. Decide on overall design.

With the architecture of your site decided, you can turn your attention to page layout. Not everyone is an artist, and not everyone need be. Regardless of your artistic abilities, you can decide what elements to include on each page and design an overall page layout. For example, you may determine that each page must have the main navigation bar down the left hand side (see figure 1.6). You might also decide that there will be a title at the top, a copyright and last modified line at the bottom, and a graphic icon in the upper right-hand corner.

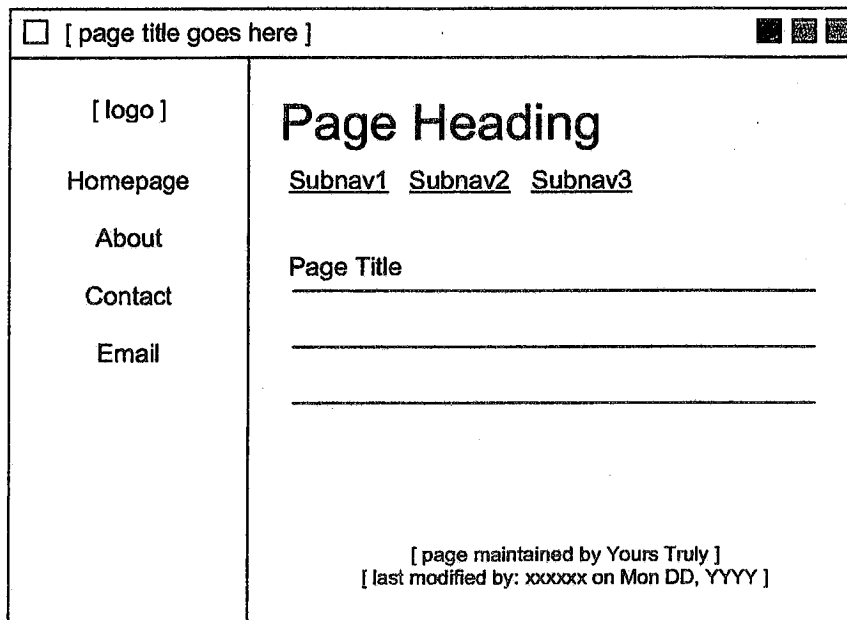


Figure 1.6—Sample Page Spec