

Processes Interacting between Designer, Developer, and Marketer

There are many cooks in the web kitchen including, designers, developers, marketers, and audiences or contributors. They all have a stake in the outcome of a web project and its continued relevance. What has not been clearly defined is the professional relationship of these different factions nor their process relationship as the project is taking shape. Each individual discipline has its own rhetoric explaining their roles and responsibilities to themselves to ensure a level of competency and professionalism however, overlapping skills, differing points of view and time tables quickly clash straining these relationships.

The marketing of content on the web continually changes as the technology affords different options for interacting with users what Tim O'Reilly calls, "the perpetual beta" (2007). Socialization of companies as part of a market strategy is forcing relationships with customers that, in the past, have not been as sincere as once stated. The notion of "professional friend" as someone who looks after the online community as a partner in product development is new to companies who saw their core competency as product supplier rather than service provider. Developing a plan to implement this strategy takes a long time and insight into the needs of the audience but must also be flexible to accommodate trends and wavering interests of the audience. Deployment of the plan comes at the end of the marketing process. Promotion of the product is a result of understanding audience need, exploring different positions of the competition and exploiting the flexibility of an agile production process. Marketing plans begin to look like starting points with no product "life cycle", that include an end.

Compare this to the web application developer whose focus is naturally on the vehicle of interaction as the product in of itself. Their process starts with the specifications drawn out from the marketing or business plan. Web developers have adopted a more "build-and-modify" approach that is constrained by their own understanding of the problem and familiarity with potential solutions or ability to generate unique solutions. Some web developers may see their position as subcontractor but without their involvement in the planning stage, ideas outside the scope of projects could be avoided or scaled to a feasible size. In addition, the developer's process has a short planning stage resulting in default strategies or known solutions that make development more efficient but not always the most appropriate.

What is the role of designer in this process? We dutifully teach the design process that follows some variant of plan-create-iterate-implement schema, however, we do not know how that fits within developers and marketers processes? The more engaging role for designers is one of liaison between the marketer and the web developer because we have understood two concerns of these disciplines that we

can translate for all stakeholders. The first is the understanding of the audience and our ability to interpret their interests in the design. The second is the functional aspect of technology and its impact on the user ability to achieve their goals. This position of liaison is achieved by understanding the processes of marketing and development and examines the design process to aid both the design of the project and the other disciplines to move forward in their own work. The visual interpretation of these processes and their underlying goals is the focus for designers in interactive media but only parallels the origins of design education nor has “process interpreter” typically been the domain of designers. If designers assume this position of liaison, we are also poised to assume the direction of user testing of interactive media. Our established relationship with the audience is enough to easily collect data while refining the design solution. The audience feedback immediately influences the design accelerating the entire process. If we do not take this broader approach to designing interactive media designers will be relegated to sub-trade who decorates sites at the end of the process.

Finally, these additional responsibilities offer the possibility for designers to take a more active role in the process of creating interactive media. It also requires more skills or a change in how we see ourselves as designers and what skill set is important to be a leader in the process. It is the aim of this prospectus to begin to identify short falls in design education and prioritize a list of skills for interactive media designers.

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