COMMUNICATING WITH VISUAL HIERARCHY

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- Site-Seeing: A Visual Approach to Web Usability (Wiley & Sons)
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- eBay Inc., Lead Designer
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Outline

• Why does visual hierarchy matter?
• How do we construct a visual hierarchy?
• How do we use visual hierarchy to:
  • Communicate messages
  • Illuminate actions
  • Organize information

How We Use the Web

“Look around feverishly for anything that is interesting or vaguely resembles what you are looking for, and is clickable.” –Steve Krug

-Steve Krug, Don’t Make Me Think: A Common Sense Approach to Web Usability
Design Considerations

• Presentation: How your application appears to your audience
• Interaction: How your application behaves in response to user actions
• Organization: The structure of your application
Presentation

- All interactions occur through the presentation
- Inform users
  - Establish relationships between content
  - Guide users through actions
- Make organizational systems clear
  - Provide situational awareness
  - Maintain consistency to create a sense of place
- Effectively convey brand message to your audience
  - Emotional impact
  - Engage and invite
  - Provide a unique personality

What Makes a Great Presentation?

- Visual Organization
  - Communicates the relationships between user interface elements
  - Enables Interaction Design
  - Information Design
- Personality
  - Communicates the brand essence of a product
  - Visceral design
  - Color, font, image, pattern selection
The End Goal

- Quickly Communicate
  - What is this? Usefulness
  - How do I use it? Usability
  - Why should I care? Desirability
Communicate function

Before Visual Hierarchy
Before & After Visual Hierarchy

PRINCIPLES OF VISUAL HIERARCHY

Photo by Matteo Penzo
How We See

• How we make sense of what we see
  • Recognizing similarities & differences
  • This allows us to group information
  • And give it meaning
• Relationships
  • Between individual elements
  • To the whole (story)

Understanding Perception

• Several principles tell us how (why) we group visual information
  • **Proximity** - elements close together are perceived as a group
  • **Similarities** - of shape, size, color can group elements
  • **Continuance** - grouped through basic patterns
  • **Closure** - group elements by space filled between them
Forming Relationships

- Creating relationships requires an understanding of what makes things different
- Introducing variations in one or more of the above categories creates visual contrast
- Also created through positioning

Using Relationships

- Use visual relationships to
  - Add more or less visual weight to objects
  - Difference is created by contrast between objects
  - Why do we want to vary the visual weight of objects...
**Visual Hierarchy**

- Creates a center of interest that attracts the viewer's attention
- Creates a sense of order and balance
- Establishes a pattern of movement to guide a viewer through a composition
- In other words, it tells a story
  - Like all good stories it has a beginning, end, and a point.

**Hierarchy Applied**

- Visual weight guides you through
  - Image
  - Title
  - Date & Location
  - Ticket Information

- Building an effective hierarchy
  - Involves use of visual relationships to add more or less visual weight to elements
Building Effective Hierarchies

- Distribution of visual weight
  - Visually dominant images get noticed most
  - Focal point, center of interest
- Distinct visual weight guides you through narrative
  - Essential to keep it balanced

No Clear Hierarchy
No Hierarchy

Effective Hierarchy
To Summarize

- **Visual Communication** is part
- **Visual Organization** and part personality.
- **Visual Hierarchy** is a deliberate prioritization of
- **Visual Weight** enabled by the manipulation of
- **Visual Relationships** to create
- **Meaning** for users.
WHAT'S THE PRIORITY?

NOW WE KNOW HOW TO CONSTRUCT A VISUAL HIERARCHY
BUT WHAT DO WE DO WITH IT?

COMMUNICATING A CENTRAL MESSAGE

WHAT IS THIS?
EXPLAIN & DIFFERENTIATE
Web Applications

- Hosting costs less than cup of coffee per month
- Free open source platforms
- Development toolkits increasingly available
- Instant global audience: 1.2B people use the Internet (Sept 2007)

Not enough hierarchy
Too many visual differences

Not enough contrast
Meeting Expectations

- Prioritization becomes especially important when you consider how people access content
  - Content Aggregators
  - Display Surfaces
  - Content Creation Sites
  - Search
  - Communication Tools
  - More...
Accessing Content

- Content Aggregators: Digg, Delicious, etc.

Accessing Content

- Display Surfaces: Facebook, MySpace, etc.
Accessing Content

- Content Creation Sites: Blogs, Wikis

Accessing Content

- Search
- Communication: Email, Instant Messenger, etc.
Primary & Secondary Actions in Web Forms

In recent years, I’ve been working on refining the design recommendations in my articles, with the goal of creating an intuitive and user-friendly interface. Form names like "Contact", "Feedback", or "Device" are often used to denote the form’s purpose. However, users may find the names confusing, as they do not provide clear information about the form’s function.

Primary & Secondary Actions

Forms can have two types of actions: primary and secondary. Primary actions are the main actions, such as submitting or submitting with specific conditions. Secondary actions are additional actions that can be performed on the form after the primary action is performed. Secondary actions are often used to provide feedback to the user or to request more information.

TYPICAL WEB FORM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal Information</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Name</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last Name</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Address Information</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Address</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zip Code</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SPECIAL ACTION

Secondary actions, on the other hand, tend to be less obvious and can often be overlooked. They are more subtle and can be used to provide additional information or to request more details. Secondary actions are often used to provide feedback or to request more information.

Secondary actions can be used to refine user experiences, especially when used consistently. For example, a"Device" form can include a"Contact" action to provide feedback or to request more information. This can be helpful for designers who want to improve user experiences and keep users engaged.
24% CONTENT
76% SITE OVERHEAD

City celebrates Olympics bid win

By Mary Worobetz and Michele S. Synder
Chicago Tribune
Published Apr. 16, 2007, 09:37 PM CDT

Purdue, armed and still glowing from the weekend selection of Chicago as the U.S. candidate to host the 2016 Olympics, began its final push to win on Tuesday as it kept the United States Olympic Committee's choice and further public support for the Games.

Olympics are the Games of the world, where thousands of athletes compete for medals. But what about the millions of others who support the Games and the athletes in other countries?

The centerpiece of the day's events was a Daley Center rally where thousands of supporters, like those at the Olympics, celebrated the Games and supported athletes.

*Some sex off us is going to be on

---

32 Shot Dead on Virginia Tech Campus

Roanoke, Va., April 16 -- Thirty-two people were killed, along with a police officer, at least 17 injured in a shooting attack on Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University during a class on the Virginia Tech campus.

No details about the shooter were released. The shooter and at least three others were thought to be in the building at the time. The shooter was killed in a交火. Police said.

A witness said the shooter, a 23-year-old student, entered the classroom and began shooting. Police said.

The Virginia Tech shooting was one of the deadliest in U.S. history.
**TAKE ACTION**

**WHAT DO I DO NOW?**

**USER NEEDS & BUSINESS GOALS**

---

**Form Messaging**

*Manage Your Fairmont President's Club Profile*

If you are already a Fairmont President's Club member and you would like to manage your profile directly so that you can view your stay history, comments on past stays, take special member packages and update your profile, simply enter your Fairmont President's Club number along with your month and day of birth. We will verify your personal membership number against your birth date in order to confirm your identity and ensure your privacy.

In addition, select a username and password so that you can sign in directly to Fairmont.com each time you visit. This will allow you to expedite your online booking experience and receive email confirmations for your reservations.

If you are having difficulties with any of these steps, please feel free to click the "Help" button and complete the form. The form will be sent directly to the Fairmont President's Club Guest Services Team.

We are sorry, we cannot find the Fairmont President's Club profile based on Fairmont President's Club number provided. Please verify the number and try again.
Form Messaging

If you are already a Fairmont President’s Club member and you would like to manage your profile online so that you can view your stay history, comments or profile stats, check special number packages and update your profile, simply enter your Fairmont President’s Club number and enter your details at the bottom. We will verify your personal membership number against your birth date in order to confirm your identity and ensure your privacy.

In addition, select a username and password so that you can sign in directly to Fairmont.com each time you visit. This will allow you to expedite your online booking experience and receive email confirmations for your reservations.

If you are having trouble filling out any of the steps below, please feel free to click the “Help” button and complete the form. The form will be sent directly to the Fairmont President’s Club Member Services Team.

Your Fairmont President’s Club Number

Fairmont President’s Club #
530955

We cannot find the Fairmont President’s Club number you entered. Please try again or contact us.

Birth Date
11-10-1968

Your Name and Password

Please please a user name and password.

Email call to action

----- Forwarded message of existing email --------
From: Ronnie Roe <ronnie@email.com>
Date: Sep 13, 2016 2:31 PM
Subject: Rya wants to have lunch in Atherton, California at House of Openhe, Friday September 15, 2016 at 12:30pm.

Rya wants to have lunch in Atherton, California at House of Openhe, Friday September 15, 2016 at 12:30pm.

My guest Renvino to invite you to lunch.

Rya says:
CREATIVELY 80S The summer of Openhe is coming to an end, and half our crew will be going back to Chicago this weekend. Come see the team, the house we’ve been working on, and the site we’ve been working on, while showing off some stuff I’m probably.

Please follow this URL to reply: http://renvino.com/plan.php

OR

Like this form to request to the event:

- I’m there!
- Sorry, can’t make it this time.
- I want to come but have a constraint.

Response message:

Speak:

----------End of forwarded email----------
Email call to action

From: Adam at Renkoo.com <noreply@email.renkoo.com>
Reply-To: "Adam" <adam@adams.name>
Date: Sun, 16 Sep, 2009 2:13 PM
Subject: Adam sent you a Renkoo invite to Adams Reel Party
To: luke@blue.com

Adam Riefkin invites you to a party at House of Fluff in Millbrae
on Thursday, October 15 at 04:00pm
Let Adam know if you can make it:
☐ I'm there!
☐ Sorry, can't make this time.
☐ Maybe, depends on...
Add a message:

Respond to this Invitation

Adam says:
GHONGONG(like): The summer of Operative is coming to an end, and half our crew will be going
back to Chicago this weekend. Come see the team, the house we've been working in, and the life
we've been working on, while chowing down on some BBQ!

For more details on what, when, and where check out: http://renkoo.com/plan.php

P.S. More info? Get a lift or text message invitations instead

Renkoo Luke used Renkoo to plan this event. It's how friends arrange when and where!

Take action?

Welcome to the eBay Affiliate Program

Welcome to the eBay Affiliate Program!
Take action: download

Firefox 2

The award-winning Web browser is now faster, more secure, and truly customizable to your needs. With Firefox 2, you've added powerful new features that make your online experience even better.

- Enjoy a Better Web Experience (Firefox 2 delivers helpful new features to make your online experience more productive).
- Pay Secure on the Web (Firefox continues to lead the way in online security and now offers added protection from online scams to keep you safe).
- Personalize Your Browser (Choose from over a thousand useful address bar enhancements Firefox lets you personalize Firefox to make it your own).

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Take action

PayPal

You're about to send $37

To: lucky@37signals.com (verified member)

Source: 1.7 from your PayPal balance

Email

Email subject: Here's the cash! See ya.
Note: Thanks for baking me out. I also included $7 for the cab ride. Thanks again!

Shipping Information

Ship to: 400 N. Wabash St., #350, Chicago, IL 60602; [USA (Confirmed)]

I'm not shipping anything, no address required.

Send the $37

Log Out | Help
Take action

Check Payment Details

Payment Details
- Pay to: paypal.jf@spinfree.com (a verified member)
- Amount: $37.00
- Source of Funds: PayPal balance [more funding options]
- Email Subject: Thanks for bailing me out! I also included $7 for the cab ride. Thanks again!
- Note: 

Shipping Information
- Shipping to: 403 North May Street, #300, Chicago, IL 60622, USA
- No shipping address required

Send the $37

Clear path to completion

WAL-MART

Enter Shipping Address

Enter the name and address you’d like for us to ship your order, or you can change it to match or any other address. Please enter the U.S. state.

First Name:

Last Name:

Address Line 1 (or company address): 

Address Line 2 (optional):

City:

State:

ZIP Code:

Phone Number:

Is this address also your billing address?
- Yes
- No (Then we'll ask for it again)

Continue: We send all items to this address only
One primary action

One primary & one secondary action
One primary & one secondary action

Two primary actions
Before Visual Communication
After Visual Communication?

Limited hierarchy
Clear hierarchy

A Simple Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Statistics</th>
<th>Current Caseload: 10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Admissions Today: 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Admissions This Month: 30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Discharges Today: 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Discharges This Month: 22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Statistics

- Caseload: 10
- Number of Admissions: 5
- Number of Discharges: 3
After Visual Communication?

- “I think I found an even better solution to simplify this part of user interface.” — One Creative Director’s Journal

- “This way I think users will need even less time to see all the information presented in the table especially frequent users. For new users or users in doubt once they rollover the number for which they don’t know the meaning, they will see a description.”

http://andreysmagin.com/blog/redesigning-a-simple-table

After Visual Communication?

- Is there a prioritization of the data
- Is everything equally important?
- Introducing size and color variations might add visual noise instead of bringing extra attention to really important data
Comparison

General Statistics
- Current Caseload: 10
- Number of Admissions Today: 9
- Number of Admissions This Month: 25
- Number of Admissions Last Month: 30
- Number of Discharges Today: 3
- Number of Discharges This Month: 22
- Number of Discharges Last Month: 34

Statistics
- Current Caseload: 10
- New Admissions:
  - 9 today
  - 35 this month
  - 38 last month
- Discharges:
  - 3 today
  - 22 this month
  - 34 last month

Focus on the data?

Focus on the data?
Focus on the data?

To Summarize

- **Visual Communication** is part
- **Visual Organization** and part personality.
- **Visual Hierarchy** is a deliberate prioritization of
- **Visual Weight** enabled by the manipulation of
- **Visual Relationships** to create
- **Meaning** for users.
  - Communicate messages
  - Illuminate actions
  - Organize information
For more information...

- Functioning Form
  - www.lukew.com/ff/
- Web Form Design: Filling in the Blanks
  - 15% OFF!
- Site-Seeing: A Visual Approach to Web Usability
  - Wiley & Sons
- Drop me a note
  - luke@lukew.com