

From Start to Finish: The Making of a Website

This document provides a look at the basic process used at Lucille Design to create or redesign a website. Don't be intimidated by the many details of this process. Lucille Design will stand by you every step of the way. *In general, the more prepared and decisive you are, the faster your site will go up.*

1) Planning

- ◆ Begin by determining exactly what you want your new or redesigned website to accomplish. Who are you trying to reach? What do you want your visitors to do when they get to your website...call you? Read information? Participate in a forum? Buy something?
- ◆ Next, you determine basic requirements for the site so that you are able to choose a hosting service wisely. Are there interactive features that must be included in the site?
- ◆ Next, begin to think about which and how much information should be made available on your site.

2) Pre-work

- ◆ **All new clients are eligible for a free half-hour consultation from Lucille Design.** Not sure where to start? Wondering if it's possible to get the new site live before a particular event? Struggling with domain names? Lucille Design can help you assess your options and determine next steps.
- ◆ Choose a web host and a service plan, if you don't already have one.
 - Note: Most clients have found it extremely useful to speak with the Creative Director of Lucille Design *prior* to committing to a hosting service or shopping for a domain name.
- ◆ Choose and register a domain name for your site, if you don't already have one.
 - As soon as a domain name is secured, a temporary website should be established.
 - If this is a new domain name for your organization, it makes sense to transition your email to the new domain name at this time.
- ◆ Research websites of others in your field to further refine the goals and purpose of your own site.
- ◆ Fill out the *Lucille Design Web Questionnaire* to communicate your detailed objectives, target audience, and budget constraints.
- ◆ You begin to develop website content (the information and images to be displayed on your website).
- ◆ Discuss preliminary site architecture with your team/organization/colleagues. (That is, determine how many major sections will be used to organize the material visitors see on your site, and what those sections will be called.) At a minimum, the organization of your site should make it possible for visitors to determine the "Who", "What", "Why", "Where", "When", and "How" of your organization.
- ◆ Develop (or sort through existing collections for) photos and other graphical images for use on your website. You might include photos of your services, facilities or products, your staff, your target audience, etc.
- ◆ Gather testimonials, statistics, or other persuasive material you might want to showcase on your site.

3) Design

- ◆ Receive and review an Estimate of Costs based on your preliminary site requirements and all known information about the interactive features and depth of content to be included on your site. Smaller sites will bypass this formal estimate step and instead be given "ballpark" verbal estimates based upon requirements.

- ◆ Authorize Lucille Design to proceed.
- ◆ Provide Lucille Design with preliminary site architecture (the names of all major sections of the site). This may be as simple as “About Us”, “Services”, “Donate”, “Resources”, and “Contact Us.”
 - Note: The *number* of sections -- even more than their titles -- is an extremely important consideration in the design of a website. Think of it like this: in order to slice a cake into equal portions, you need to know how many people it is expected to feed prior to cutting the first piece. For a web designer to carve visual space into discrete chunks in a way that is both uncluttered and interesting, s/he needs to know how many sections your website will contain.
- ◆ Provide Lucille Design with your organization’s logo and/or type face.
 - If you don’t yet have a logo, Lucille Design has excellent designers available to create one for you.
- ◆ Lucille Design creates a draft design of your home page and/or an internal page.
- ◆ Receive and review the proposed design for your site’s home (main) page and/or an internal page. What you receive is simply a static picture of how it might look – the picture does not contain anything that responds when you click on it.
- ◆ Receive and review revised design concepts as necessary.
- ◆ You approve the design.
- ◆ Confirm the final site architecture. (That is, the major sections, subsections, and possibly menu drop-down lists of your site.)
- ◆ Provide meta-tag information to Lucille Design. (These are the keywords that others are likely to use when searching for your site or your services / products.)

4) Production

- ◆ Lucille Design translates the design concept into the (x)HTML programming language, producing an actual website that is *not* accessible to the public.
 - Note: As much attention is paid to the coding of your web site (which is invisible to you), as the design (which is what you see). All Lucille Design websites are hand-coded rather than produced in programs such as Dreamweaver. This practice insures against sloppy code which in turn prevents cross platform differences, browser incompatibilities, increased file size, and higher maintenance and redesign costs later on.
- ◆ You deliver final content (all the words and images to be displayed on your site) to Lucille Design.
 - Typically, text for the site is delivered in the form of Microsoft Word documents (one per major section, with page breaks between different web pages.) Text should be formatted in the way that you wish it to appear on the site, including any bolding, italics, bullets, tables, numbered lists, block quotes, indentations or tabbing. Lucille Design will add color and section formatting as prescribed by the design.
 - Text must be fully proofed and have already passed through any editing processes necessary to be in its final form.
- ◆ Lucille Design loads all content into the live development site.
- ◆ You review the development site for accuracy and completeness.

5) Testing

- ◆ Lucille Design tests the development site for compatibility across Windows and Macintosh computers
- ◆ Lucille Design tests the development site for compatibility with different browsers such as Internet Explorer and Mozilla Firefox.
- ◆ Lucille Design evaluates usability for people using slower internet connections.
- ◆ Any discovered issues are resolved.

- ◆ You authorize Lucille Design to make your website publicly available. Lucille Design then moves the entire site to it's new, permanent Internet address.
- ◆ If you haven't done so already, develop a plan to publicize and promote your website.

6) Go Live!

- ◆ Implement your promotional plan.
- ◆ Be sure that your website address is listed on ALL outbound materials, from the signature line of your e-mail messages to your business cards and printed brochures. (Lucille Design can also help with the design and production of these print materials as well)