# Bad Site Projects

This Part 1 of the Design Project initiates a series of four phases for design in this course. We will begin by finding a problematic ("bad") site, and you will evaluate it in Part 2 as a potential target for your future design steps. Next in Part 3 you will develop a set of needs by "interviewing" likely users of the site and providing conclusions about what the site should be in the future. Finally, in Part 4, due at the end of the course, you will develop fixes in the form of an improved design, and explain your design choices. The final presentation should be a YouTube video or narrated PowerPoint deck, in which you tie together all four parts of the project, refined if necessary, and tied together into a cohesive design document.

You are welcome to work individually, or, starting with Part 2, in teams of up to three. Keep in mind that my expectations of quality, professionalism, and length will increase with team size. That is, while I expect one person to be thorough, I expect three people to be especially so and provide a more elaborate product.

# Part 1: Bad Site (Individual Only)

This is an important step. To prevent having to start over for Parts 2 through 4, choose carefully here. Choose a hobby, organization, or shopping site you care enough about to deal with it for the entire course. If you have a job that has a poor intranet, you might be able to help the IT people at work at the same time as you satisfy course credit.

Most people encounter unfamiliar Websites often, in everyday situations such as shopping, finding information about products, registering for classes, visiting a medical doctor, etc. Some sites require a bewildering amount of clicking and backtracking, repeated sign-in, and responses to undecipherable questions.

Your job is to:

1. Find an example of a site you have seen and have judged to have terrible qualities. Please provide the URL of the site as well as a screen capture (actually, active window capture) in case it changes. For the screen capture, you can make sure the window is active, then press ALT-PrtSc (Alt-Printscreen) to capture just the browser window to the clipboard. Then you can with CTRL-V paste the clipboard contents into Word. You are welcome to capture a few screens to illustrate the problem.
2. Write a few sentences to describe what is bad about the site.
3. Write a few sentences to explain why it might have been designed that way or evolved as such. This is where you try to understand how the designer could have done this to you without remorse.

We will discuss in class potential defenses, origins of the problems, and therefore perhaps the designer's side of the issue. The goal is for you to better understand the genesis of design problems and ultimately avoid creating such problems for others. We will not be able to go through everyone’s in class.

Common length would be a couple of pages, covering perhaps one or two screens.

# Part 2 – Proposal for Fixing the Bad Site

At this point, you should be set up to work either by yourself or on a team of up to 2 other students (3 total per group).

If you are working on a team, compare notes on the Bad Sites you uncovered, and choose one to go ahead and try to fix in the next three Parts of this project.

This part enables you to provide some definition of the value of continuing to focus on this site. Please answer the following questions:

1. Provide a context of the site's purpose. Of what value is the site? What benefits does it provide? Who uses it?
2. What would be gained by spending effort in fixing it? Time savings? More sales? Better decisions? You will be limited in what you can describe, but try to provide some ideas here of the benefits of improving the bad site.
3. Make a rough estimate of what would be required to fix it. Costs are not needed, but you might investigate who would need to work on it, and other systems that might be involved. You can state your answer in person-days, money, or even simply stating how many pages and files/databases would likely need to be changed.
4. Provide an idea of how #2 compares to #3. Do the benefits outweigh the costs? Or vice-versa?

# Part 3 – Data Collection

Part 3 continues your design project. This assignment requires you to observe usage (by timing them) and also to interview them to uncover their needs. You will then provide conclusions about what the site should be in the future. In Part 2 you determined likely users of the site. So we will make use of them in this project.

1. Create any five representative and important benchmark tasks (using your own judgment) and time two users per team member who use the actual site. Provide a summary of timings for those tasks as well as a total time to accomplish the five tasks. For example, for an on-line store, it could include searching for a product, reading about it, adding it to the shopping cart, entering shipping information, and paying for it.
2. Before saying goodbye to the two users (per team member), interview them to see what they decide is needed for improving the site. They might discuss some of the problems you discussed in Design Project Part 1, and places they became stuck during the timing tasks. Or you might find that they discuss problems you never thought about. Provide an approximate transcript of what they discuss.
3. Evaluate the findings of the interviews. Do any ONE of the following per group member: (a) Sort/summarize the findings using any sensible categorization scheme. For instance, if efficiency is one of your issues, all comments about errors and also about slow speed would sort into that issue. (b) List any deviations from your Part 2 findings. That is, what areas did users uncover that you did not, and what areas did you uncover that users did not? (c) Evaluate the issues as to feasibility: cost (high, medium, low) and benefit (high, medium, low). Plot the issues to be fixed on X-Y axes with cost as the X axis and benefit as the Y axis.
4. Based on your data collection, provide decisions about what you believe should be done to provide maximum benefit. What improvements are most urgent? What changes are least urgent?

# Part 4 – The Redesign

Part 4 is the culmination of your work to date. This assignment involves some creative work in redesigning website pages based on the previous findings, especially in Part 3. This one is back to 10 points but you have a chance to earn a bonus point.

Please do the following:

1. Provide some simulated site pages, using either PowerPoint, diagramming in Word, or actual site development (1 point bonus). Put them into a Word document to show the new structure. Your changes should be significant in achieving better effectiveness, efficiency, or ease of use. Please do not focus only on aesthetics such as color or fonts.
2. Explain the improvements. Why did you make the changes you made? What benefits do you project?
3. If you do not have a real system, print the site pages and arrange the pages on a table. Time two new users per group member, while they "do" the five benchmark tasks you developed in Part 3. They will "click" with their finger and then move to the next page. Provide the timings. Determine roughly if there has been an objective improvement.

# Presentation

The final step in your design project is to "sell" your design to management so that they will realize the importance of positive action.

In short, cover the key steps of the project, according to your own belief system. Cover them in a persuasive manner, using a 4-minute (maximum) video. Upload the video and we will watch each one then move quickly to the next one.

You can use humor, but do it sparingly, be professional and describe your work carefully yet quickly.