

The Simplify Company

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WEBSITE PRE-PLANNING

AUDIENCE

Building a successful web site involves defining the audience. This is an important first step in the planning process. The site's audience is visitors that will find the site in order to achieve objectives, solve problems or get answers. The following questions will help define the target audience:

- What is the purpose and goal of the site?
- What do visitors want to know, what are they looking for?
- What benefits are visitors looking for?
- What do visitors want to do?
- How do visitors want to feel?

Think about the content you offer and who is most likely to need and use it. Write down the characteristics of these visitors in clear English. The resulting list of audience profiles may be quite diverse and require you to consolidate visitors into groupings with similar characteristics.

Consider the following characteristics for each target audience group:

- Audience Characteristics (profession, age, gender, needs, etc.)
- Information Preferences (what information the users want first, second, etc.)
- Platform Specifications (hardware, browser, screen resolution, modem speed, etc.)
- Range of Abilities (vision, hearing, web experience, etc.)
- Environmental Challenges (poor lighting, noise, etc.)

PURPOSE

Define a purpose statement that will guide the development team through defining the audience, developing the strategy, and creating the content of the site. The following questions will help determine the site's purpose:

- What is the mission or purpose of the organization or service?
- What are the short- and long-term goals of the site?

Also, clearly defined, measurable objectives will help you determine what is most important to the website visitors.

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CONTENT

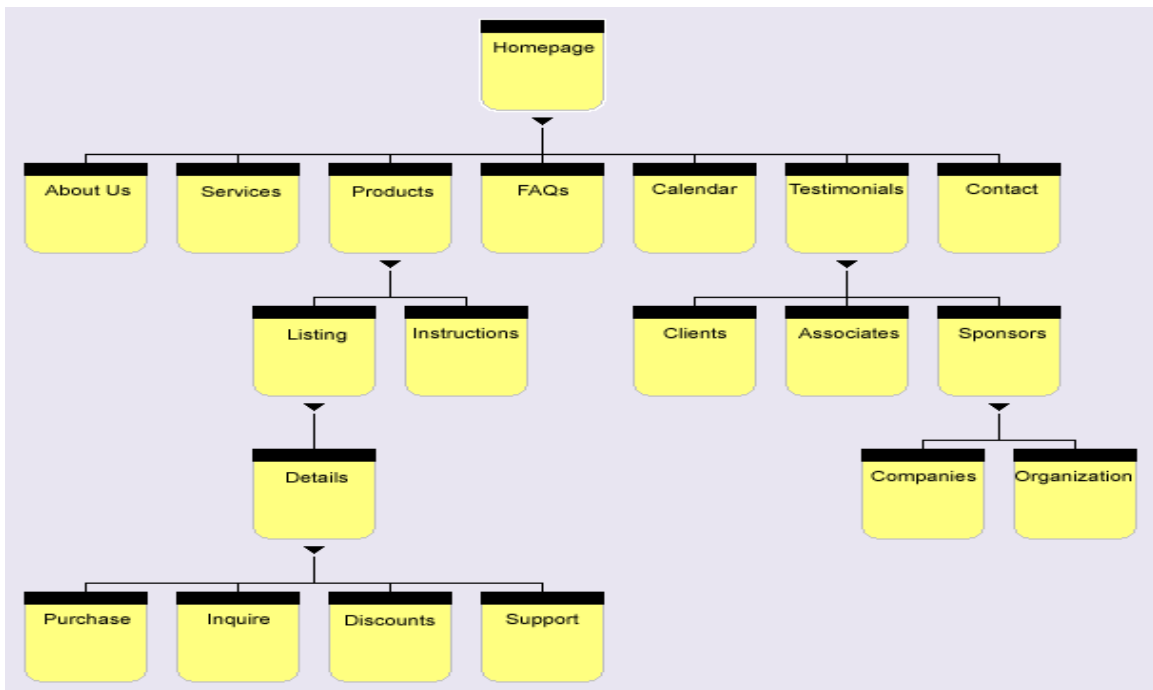
Create a list of all the information sources, services, processes, and other content you offer (or plan to offer) that can be made available through the Web. Eliminate items that don't directly advance the purpose of your site.

Categorize the items in your content inventory according to visitor needs.

Then, organize the content within each category by its relative importance to visitors. Name each category with a concise and descriptive title. These will become the main "category" links.

STORYBOARDING

Storyboarding involves recording the description, purpose, and title of the every page in your site and then linking these pages together to create a visual model.



The objective of storyboarding is to organize a site structure in a way that effectively guides visitors to the information they require and helps them accomplish their goals.

Starting with the home page, organize the pages that link from the home page; then organize the pages that link from these pages. Continue this process until you have included all of the pages in your site. The resulting diagram should resemble a pyramidal structure of pages linked together by lines. The website skeleton is ready for content!