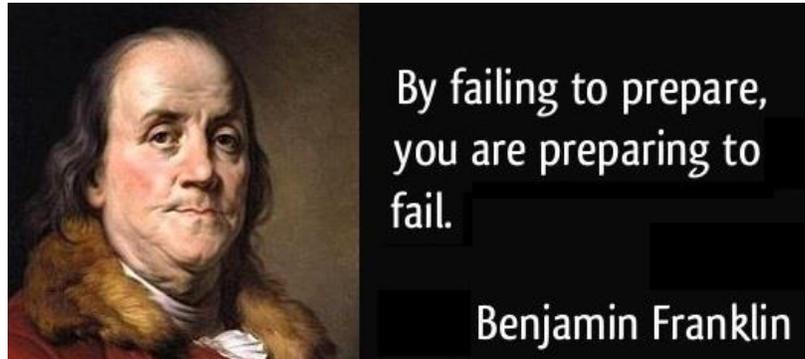# Planning and Mapping out a Website

Why Plan and Map out a Website

Anything worth creating is worth planning for. The time and research that goes into planning and mapping out a Website will save a web developer hours in the long run. Planning and mapping out a website will create the blueprint for the site and can be used to show clients, project managers and other web developers the concept of the site to be created.

As Benjamin Franklin once said "by failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail" is never truer than when it comes to designing and building website. There are multiple aspects that need to be taken into consideration when planning a website.

Planning and mapping out a website might seem like a daunting task but it is a necessary one to make that website something that web users will want to visit and use. As a developer questions that you will need answer include what type of website is being developed? Is in an informational site or an ecommerce site? Will visitors need to download files or fill in forms? Will the site have pictures, images, videos and audio? How interactive will this site be?

The questions can be overwhelming but if you break it down into small tasks you can see it is very doable. Here is how I suggest a developer approach this task:

Step 1: Evaluate the subject matter of the site. Need it be a website for a band or a veterinary clinic you have to think about what information is being conveyed to the visitor. A band might want to have an introduction of who they are, samples of their music to listen to, upcoming dates and venues to see and hear them play, band merchandise, and how to follow them on social media while a veterinarian clinic might list their hours of operations, who their staff is, what services they provide and how to find them. Sometimes this information has already been figured out and sometimes you have to assist the person who you are developing the site for to map out this information.

Researching other like sites is a great way to see how your project might look like is a great way to start. Looking at other similar sites will assist you with how you can map out the various elements and pages for the site you have been assigned to create. Most sites will have a home page, an about page, a services offered page, a contact page and then other pages that are specific to the nature of the business or organization.
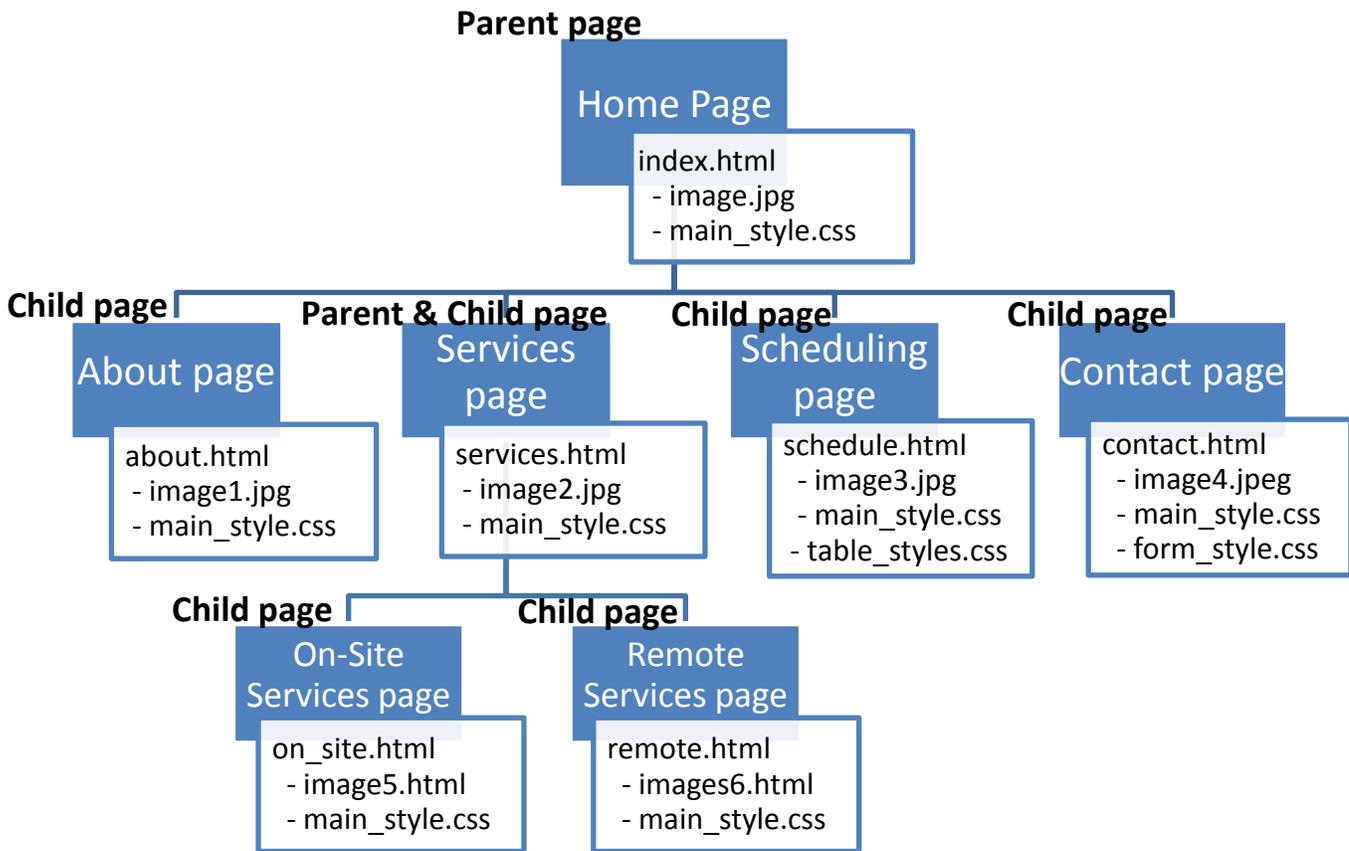
Step 2: Determine the Target Audience. Visitors to a band site are looking for very different information then visitors to a veterinarian clinic site. Knowing who will be visiting the site will assist with what information should be included on the site.

Step 3: Creating a Sitemap. A Sitemap is an illustration that represents every page in a Web site and is similar to a flowchart. The Sitemap shows the relationship of each page in the site to all the other pages in the Web site. Sitemap allows the Web Designer to visualize how each page in the Web site links to the others.

The Home page is at the top of the sitemap and is known as the parent page of the Web site. The Home page is the highest level in the web hierarchy and can have multiple pages linked to it. The pages linked below the

home page are called child pages. Child pages can have pages linked under them as well. In this instance the page can be a child page of the home page and a parent page of the pages under it in the hierarchal structure.

More detailed sitemap also include all document names, images, text files, and link information. The sitemap is meant as a guide as you develop the site to make sure you follow the planned site structure.

Parent page

Home Page

index.html
 - image.jpg
 - main_style.css

Child page

About page

about.html
 - image1.jpg
 - main_style.css

Parent & Child page

Services page

services.html
 - image2.jpg
 - main_style.css

Child page

Scheduling page

schedule.html
 - image3.jpg
 - main_style.css
 - table_styles.css

Child page

Contact page

contact.html
 - image4.jpeg
 - main_style.css
 - form_style.css

Child page

On-Site Services page

on_site.html
 - image5.html
 - main_style.css

Child page

Remote Services page

remote.html
 - images6.html
 - main_style.css

The Sitemap can be created in Microsoft Word's organizational charts, but can be created in PowerPoint or Visio as well as other software programs. The creation of a sitemap should be done in the planning stages of a Website and can help in determining how much time will need to be dedicated to building that Website. Be prepared to revisit the sitemap as needs for the website changes.

Step 4: Create the Storyboard. A storyboard is a more comprehensive way of laying out each individual page that was created in the sitemap step. A storyboard helps create a clear idea as to what a Web page or Web site will look like. A storyboard can be done in MSWord, Illustrator, Publisher, or other software programs and is a good way to communicate your vision of a Web site to your customer.   Every Web page has a structure. This structure consists of the following elements:

- Header
- Navigation Bar
- Content/Body
- Footer

Here is a sample of a storyboard for a webpage.
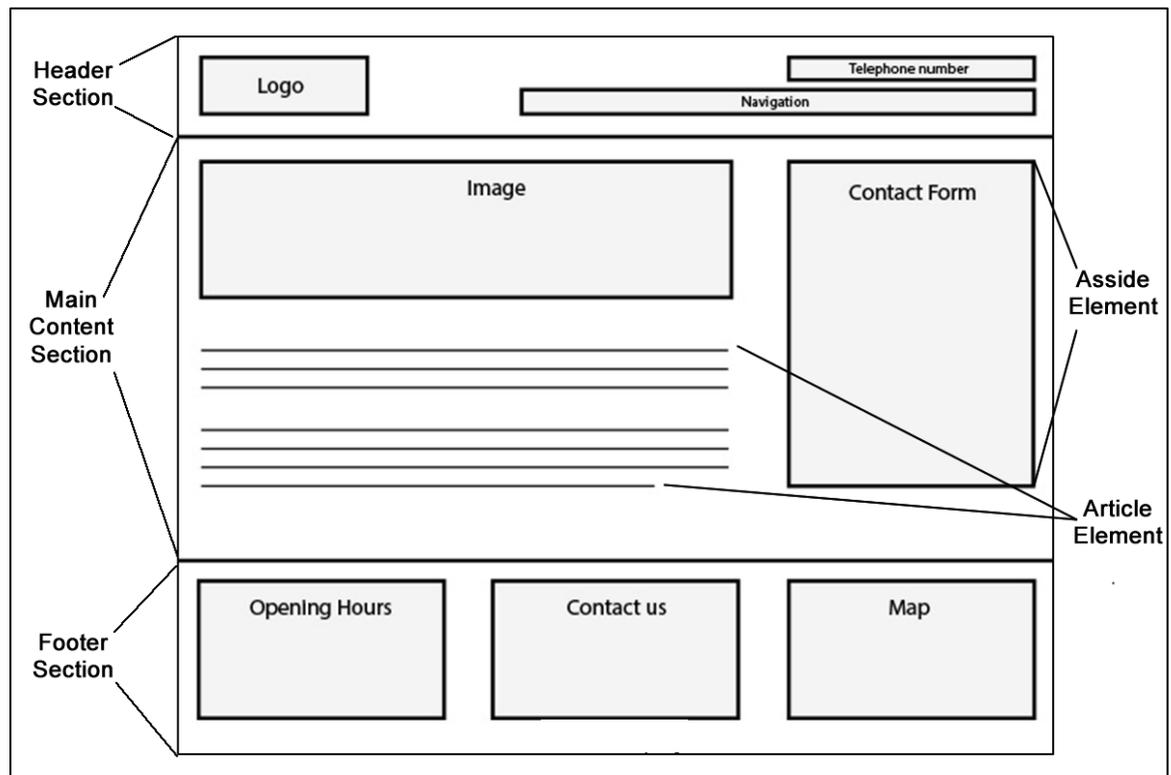
Header
Many pages have headers (also known as banners) that appear across the top or down the side of the screen and can contain the site name, logo, contact information, and links to the other pages in the site. The Web site header is an important part of the design process and time should be taken to create a professional looking header that will be appealing to the visitor. To be inspired as to what makes a good Web page header look at the following articles:

- http://vandelaydesign.com/blog/galleries/website-headers/
- http://freewebpageheaders.com/gallery/index.html
- http://blog.usabilla.com/how-to-design-a-more-effective-website-header/
- http://line25.com/articles/25-web-designs-with-clever-fixed-header-effects

Navigation Bar
The navigation bar has many names. The Navigation bar may be called the nav bar, menu bar, links, menu, etc. The nav bar is a set of text or graphic links usually organized in rows or columns that viewers can use to move between pages of a website. For examples of navigation bars review the following articles:

- http://www.free-css.com/free-css-menus/page1
- http://mashable.com/2011/12/08/design-navigation-bar/
- http://blog.kissmetrics.com/common-website-navigation-mistakes/

Main Content
The Main content of a Web page contains element such as text, images, videos, social media links, and additional navigational bars. The content can be a single column, multiple columns, multiple columns and rows, and more. For more examples of content layout review the following articles.

- http://www.free-css.com/free-css-layouts/page1
- http://www.awwwards.com/10-web-design-trends-for-2013.html
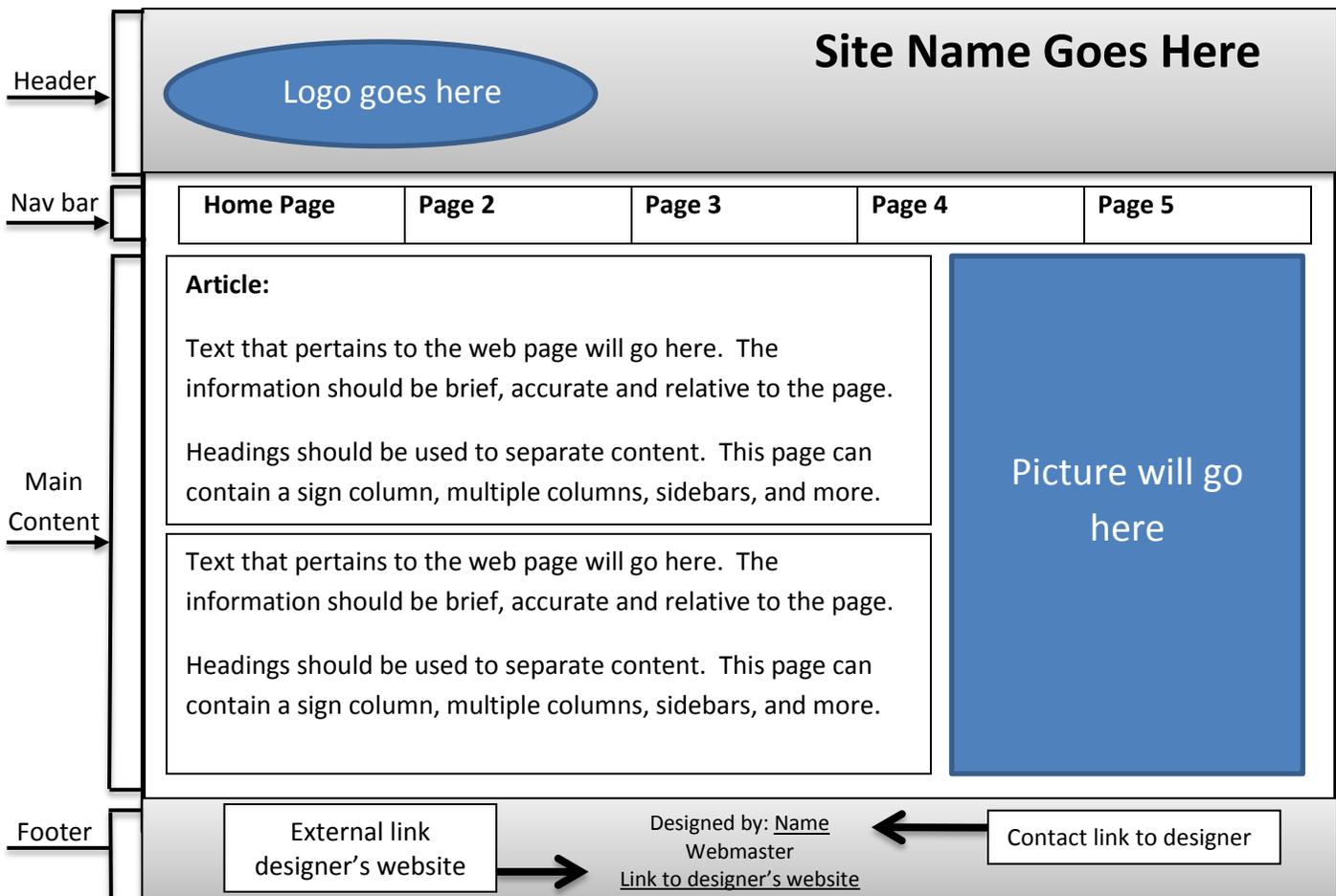- http://www.thebestdesigns.com/

Footer

The Website footer is similar to a document footer where it can contain information listed at the bottom of the page. The footer is treated as its own section of the Web page, separate from the header, content and other elements. The footer can be used as another navigation bar, have links to social media, display copy write information, business name, address and email, and much, much, more. To read more about what makes a good footer read the following articles:

- http://zurb.com/article/1203/3-techniques-to-make-a-good-footer-great
- http://www.1stwebdesigner.com/inspiration/footer-designs-showcase/

The Anatomy of a Website Storyboard

Site Name
Home Page
index.htm

Header →	**Site Name Goes Here** Logo goes here
Nav bar →		Home Page	Page 2	Page 3	Page 4	Page 5	
Main Content →	**Article:** Text that pertains to the web page will go here. The information should be brief, accurate and relative to the page. Headings should be used to separate content. This page can contain a sign column, multiple columns, sidebars, and more. Text that pertains to the web page will go here. The information should be brief, accurate and relative to the page. Headings should be used to separate content. This page can contain a sign column, multiple columns, sidebars, and more. Picture will go here
Footer →	External link designer's website Designed by: Name Webmaster Link to designer's website Contact link to designer

Additional Recommended Reading:

http://www.fastcodesign.com/1672917/the-8-steps-to-creating-a-great-storyboard

Step 5: Build webpages. Now that you have a clear vision of what the site will look like and what pages and files are needed to create those pages it is time to start coding. The most important step here is making sure you set up your site folder directory structure and subfolder and then to create the HTML document structure. Templates are sometimes used or created to keep that uniformed look throughout the site.

Step 6: Testing the site. This step should NEVER be overlooked. Each page needs to be validated and tested on multiple versions of multiple browsers. Every link should be clicked on to make sure that it leads to the page that it is intended for. Each downloadable link should be verified. This takes time but is so crucial to the success of the site.

To validate HTML pages you can use a program or website for that specific purpose. The W3C has a website that can be used for no cost at http;//validator.w3.org/.

Step 7: Review, revise, rework. After a website has been developed there will be elements that need to be reworked, changed or added. This is ongoing and may last for weeks, months or years depending on the situation. Maintenance of a website will keep it up to date and valid to both visitors and the owners of the site.