[Web Design](#) Quality Guidelines

Overview

Overtime we have tried to make sure we deliver the best for our clients as this helps us build a reputation that encourages them to refer others to our services. Because the [web design](#) quality, is pretty low for many [website designs companies](#) and freelancers in Uganda, we have decided to prepare these guidelines to help web design companies in Uganda improve on quality. They are simple basic tasks that make a great difference as far as client satisfaction is concerned.

We will keep adding and modifying them as we go on and as technologies change. Internal reviewers of initial designs, will evaluate works done basing on these guidelines.

The spirit of these guidelines is to always deliver an exceptional job for the client and not deliver just for the sake of it.

1. Process/ Workflow

The product is as good as the process. To ensure a quality, within budget and timely delivery, the following process will be followed from getting the project to finally delivering the project to the client.

1. *Meeting the Client:* the supervisor will meet the client with the designer to ascertain client needs and requirements, set delivery timelines, negotiate pricing and seal the deal. This will help reduce loss of information/communication that usually occurs when one person meets the client and then delivers to the designers. Here the designer will get first hand info on the requirements of the project.
2. *Concept Design:* If the client has given a go ahead and has deposited 50% of the invoiced amount, the designer will then come-up with a concept design depending on the determined requirements. This can be a template, theme or wireframe.
3. *Internal Concept Critique & Approval*: the designer will then present the concept design to the supervisor for critiquing, guidance, share ideas and suggestions about the concept in relation to the requirements of the project. The supervisor will then give a go ahead for the next step.
4. *Design & Development*: the designer will then design and develop the necessary features and styling, populate the database with necessary given content.
5. *Internal Design Critique:* the designer presents the initial design to the supervisor for critiquing, guidance, share ideas and suggestions for modification and improvement.
6. *Effecting Internal Changes & Approval:* the designer effects the suggested changes as agreed with the supervisor and shows the supervisors that the

changes have been effected. The supervisor will then give a go ahead for the next step.

7. *Client Presentation/Demo:* On approval by the supervisor, the designer will then upload and configure the agreed design on a demo server for the client to review.

8. *Client Critique with Designer:* the designer meets with the client to discuss and review the initial design of the website.

9. *Effecting Client Modifications:* the designer effects the agreed changes and dully alerts the client that the changes are done. Depending on the situation here, this could involve more than one iteration as clients change preferences and come upon items not previously observed.

10. *Deployment, Configuration & Training:* when the client is satisfied with the work, and with the **supervisor's approval** then the designer/developer can now upload and configure the website on the production server.

2. Content Management Systems (CMS)

Because of the importance of clients being able to update their websites regularly (for both SEO and their audiences' need for current info), and the fact that they are usually lay people, web designers will always use content management systems, unless otherwise specified by a supervisor.

1. *CMS Priorities:* Unless explicitly requested or otherwise thought necessary depending on determined client needs, CMSs will be used in the following preference; Joomla, Wordpress, Drupal, opencms and others.

2. *E-Commerce:* Magento will be used for ecommerce projects especially those with invoices exceeding 3 Millions

3. *Versions:* Latest versions of the said CMSs will always be used to improve security and features of websites and lessen the need to upgrade.

4. *Upgrade Lower Versions:* Incase lower than current versions are initially used for any reason, the designer will make it a point to upgrade to the latest version before submitting the website for internal review.

3. Templates/Themes

We have two options for templates and themes;

1. *Downloaded Templates:* these have their advantages and disadvantages and should be selected and used carefully. They usually load slowly especially those that are nulled, but nonetheless usually have nice styling and good look and feel that is usually in line with clients' needs.

1.1. *Downloading Templates:* Some sources of these templates are infested with viruses, malware, and other improper code. The developer should be sure to download a template that is not prone to any malicious code that would later haunt the client's website.

1.2. *Buying Templates:* In case a client is paying well for the project, we will desist from using nulled templates and instead possibly buy the template that we think is good or will make the project a greater success.

1.3. *Customising Downloaded Templates:* Since these downloaded templates are downloaded by many more other developers, the designer **MUST** make it a point to entirely disguise the client's website to look very different from the original template. This is true whether the template is nulled or genuinely bought. It can be very detrimental to our reputation if a client sees a similar template as his on another website.

1.4. *Maintaining Attractiveness:* However the designer should also be able to **maintain** the attractive features of the chosen template to make the website look as attractive as the template. Most of these templates have inbuilt style sheets that can be used within the different areas of the website like bullets, quotes, styled text, among others, but usually these are ignored by designers, yet they are the reason they chose the template anyway.

1.5. *Client Specific Styling:* some clients request specific styling and layouts features, the designer should always customise the style sheets and other coding frameworks to meet client needs.

2. *Custom Templates:* these are the preferred option as they give the designer more power for creativity. They also come with their disadvantages especially if creativity is not a strength, the whole template maybe unattractive. These can be through use of custom tools like dreamweaver, photoshop, etc. They can also be developed with a popular templating software called templatemoster, which supports several CMSs including direct HTML.

4. Content

Content is the text, images, files, audio-video that the client uses to communicate to his audiences via their website. Content is also a **very** important benchmark that search engines use to rank websites in search results. Our aim being to give clients value for their money, we should endeavour to make sure that their content is well within acceptable standards for not just their audiences, but also search engines. Below are the standards we will follow to ensure the above;

1. *Originality:* many client especially the small ones who don't have profiles have a tendency of copying and pasting content related to their area of operation from

the web. When this is the case, search engines like google will always redirect the client's traffic to where they copied the content, in worse situations the website might be blacklisted by search engines for plagiarism. The designer should advise the clients to always have original and well thought out content as this is key in ensuring a successful web presence for both search engines and their audiences.

2. *Developing Content:* in cases where a client doesn't have content yet, and given that many of these clients who don't usually have content believe it is part of our work to develop content for their website, the designer should always advise that we can develop the content or profile at an extra fee, which depends on the how much content is to be developed. We have a freelance professional writer for this work who should then be connected with the client to get this done.

3. *Organising Content:* Organising content is also important for both the users and search engines. Search engine will always display content the way it is organised on the website therefore careful and well thought content organisation should be used for every project. Designers have a tendency of simply copying and pasting content from the client's profile right onto the web pages. Try to go through the content and **understand** what the client intends for his audiences to understand. Then **categorise** the content appropriately avoiding long pages as these toss away clients, use appropriate images on several pages.

4. *Categorising Content:* please be sure to appropriately categorise content depending on the clients' situation. By this we mean creating content categories in the back-end which are then appropriately seen in the frontend. On top aiding search engines better organise the client's content, this also helps easen the client's work in case of updating the website with more information, as they won't have to keep adding menus but just inserting the content in relevant categories and the content appears.

5. *Demo Content:* When you use a quickstart install for downloaded templates for whatever reason, be **VERY** sure to replace or delete, I mean DELETE not trash **all** the demo content. This starts from demo users, menus, articles, images, to modules among others.

6. *Best practices on content:* simple tasks like giving relevant descriptive names to pages, bold headlines, descriptive anchor text on links, internal linking, using legible fonts, using bullets, use headings to break long articles, and bolding keywords in content, among others are the difference between top ranked and low ranked pages in search engines. Starting from our "standard pack", these best practices should be done on a client's website as basic search engine techniques.

4. Images

Images, photos, pictures are by far the best optimal way of communicating without writing. This was meant to be under content but decided to make it standalone to stress how important the quality and naming of pictures is on a website.

1. *Quality of images:* blurred, stretched, pixelated, low resolution, non-representative, even fake images are amateurish and won't be tolerated by any supervisor. Because the quality of the image imitates the quality of service or product a customer should expect from a provider, we should never use low quality pictures for our clients.

2. *Getting Images for the web:* always advise the client the importance of having quality pictures, if the client is willing to pay for hiring a professional photographer, let this be option number one. If not, offer to take relevant photos for the website, when this is also not possible as is in many situations, endeavour to look for high resolution, representative/illustrative pictures from the web, optimise them and use them appropriately with relevant captions whenever necessary.

3. *Naming Images:* I have observed some websites where the designer just replaces images used in a quickinstall, names like "example-thumb", "samplemodule" are not only negligence but also irresponsible and amateurish. All images, either thumbnails or big-size used in all our clients' websites **MUST** have relevant, descriptive titles. Relevant and descriptive captions should be used whenever necessary. These are also important for both search engines and visitors.

4. *Favicons:* Always be sure to change the favicon to that of the clients' logo from all directions it is located in the template. This is especially common in downloaded templates where there are more than one location for the favicon. Be sure to cross check and hard refresh to make sure it is changed. Paying attention to detail is professional, just don't leave this unchanged before showing the supervisor.

6. Usability

Usability the measure of how ease and pleasant it is to use a website. If a website is difficult to use, people leave. If the homepage fails to clearly state what a company offers and what users can do on the site, people leave. If users get lost on a website, they leave. If a website's information is hard to read or doesn't answer users' key questions, they leave. When google notices that many people constantly leave a website fast after opening it, it reduces the website's rank in search engines. The designer should work to satisfy the above issues through;

1. *Cross browser checks:* be sure to check that the website works fine in all relevant popular browsers.

2. *Navigation:* web navigation is key in ensuring usability of a website. Things like ensuring a uniform menu, information being well organised for ease finding, etc

make a great difference. Refer to the following checklist to make sure navigation is usable;
http://www.userfocus.co.uk/resources/navchecklist.html ,
http://www.chromaticsites.com/blog/the-dos-and-donts-of-website-navigation-usability

3. *Responsiveness:* the web template should supports mobile and desktop devices quite well.

Security

Whereas there is no such thing as 100% secure on the internet, developers **MUST** ensure that the basic security guidelines are done to prevent automatic or simple attacks from malware or hackers.

1. *Initial Security Guidelines:* For starters, follow the steps on http://www.joomlasecurity.org/ to secure a joomla website. The steps mentioned above can also be done on other CMSs. To secure wordpress follow the instructions at https://wordpress.org/about/security and to secure drupal follow instructions at https://drupal.org/security

2. *Usernames & Passwords:* as you must have read in the above guidelines, changing the default username is as important. Change passwords to strong ones, i.e. include characters and numerals.

3. *2-Factor authentication:* use plugins or inbuilt cms 2-factor authentication to put another layer of security.

Training

Always advise the client the importance of having a website updated with current information about the company or organisation. Items like news, testimonials from their previous clients, new or improved products and services, insights on engaging issues that are important to the clients' audience among others are some of the updates that website visitors expect when they visit a website.

Therefore the need to update a website necessitates training the client on general updating principles and using the CMSs you used.

First suggest that we can update the website at a fee either on a monthly basis or on an as needed basis, if the client finds this a pinching cost, then opt to train them on updating the website themselves.