



Communicating Design: Developing Web Site Documentation for Design and Planning

Dan M. Brown

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Most discussion about Web design seems to focus on the creative process, yet turning concept into reality requires a strong set of deliverables—the documentation (concept model, site maps, usability reports, and more) that serves as the primary communication tool between designers and customers. Here at last is a guide devoted to just that topic. Combining quick tips for improving deliverables with in-depth discussions of presentation and risk mitigation techniques, author **Dan Brown** shows you how to make the documentation you're required to provide into the most efficient communications tool possible. He begins with an introductory section about deliverables and their place in the overall process, and then delves into the different types of deliverables. From usability reports to project plans, content maps, flow charts, wireframes, site maps, and more, each chapter includes a contents checklist, presentation strategy, maintenance strategy, a description of the development process and the deliverable's impact on the project, and more.

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Clint Ribble says

It's a well-written and approachable book about documenting design processes. I'm glad the topic was addressed and it's a great resource and reference when needed, but it's still a book about documentation.

Tod says

This is the least useful book ever written related to the topic of web development. I got mine at a discount price, used, and I still feel cheated. If you're looking for any conceptual tools, flexible frameworks, taxonomical systems, immediately-applicable forms or practical structures for brainstorming and project management, you won't find them here. What you will find is a stream-of-consciousness of what-if scenarios, and tons of illustrations resembling abstract art more than anything else. This book is written to justify ballooning web development budgets: It's "The Art of War" for people who make their living by drawing boxes and arrows.

Natasha Flint says

Great for fundamentals of UX

Tami says

Very good information. But wordy and complex. Wonder if use of color would make easier to engage

Jennifer Schooley says

Good advice and examples for creating documentation, but much of it seemed extraneously wordy.

Dave Emmett says

This is the first textbook that I've finished reading this year; it was assigned for my Interactive Information Design class. What I really like about it is the way it breaks down all the types of documents it discusses (things like content audits, wireframes, personas, all that good stuff) into three layers of information. So you get a good sense of what actually goes into making any of these documents at a basic level, but also at a deeper level if it's required for your projects.

The other thing that makes this book great is it provides advice on how to present each type of documentation to clients; emphasizing the areas where meetings can get derailed and suggesting strategies for keeping them on track.

Kara says

I am a freelance information architect (sometimes called user experience designer or user interface design) who subcontracts to large ad agencies for the design portion of web site creation, usually large-scale b2b and b2c sites. I am fortunate in that I am often exposed to different approaches and uses of design deliverables, but unfortunate in that everyone seems to do it a little differently. I hoped this book -- recommended by a colleague in a different state -- could help standardize my outputs.

It's an interesting mix. I almost primarily focused on the Site Map, Wireframe, and Competitive Review sections -- the bread and butter of what I do for the majority of my projects.

On one hand, I was disappointed that there weren't more real examples, probably because I'm a visual person and am always curious to see what other IA's do.

On the other hand, I was pleased to see the book acknowledge so many of the problems I encounter on a daily basis. I just had a client want to know "how many wireframes" I was creating in my estimate when I wanted the conversation to be about what processes needed to be created for the site. How does the traditional, "linear" structure of site maps translate into today's more dynamic sites, where content is not neatly tucked away in nice little silos? How do you run an effective wireframe review? For a competitive review, do you analyze by feature, or competitor? These are all issues I've encountered within the past month, and they were all addressed. I changed the formatting of my site maps immediately after reading this book!

This is the first book I've encountered that spoke so specifically to the deliverables I produce that part of me wanted even more than the book offered. I would have liked to see even more about collaborating with the development team, particularly with the layout and annotating of wireframes.

Sometimes the book talked about stuff I already knew, and sometimes I wanted more visual examples and just a little bit of color, but this was by far the most specific and comprehensive reference books I have on my shelf currently. This may be a lot for the very beginner to digest. I've been doing this for 11 years, and probably would have benefited the most from this the most about 2-3 years into my career -- when I had enough real-world examples to apply the examples against. Still, there are points here that I find relevant now. I've recommended it to several of my other colleagues so we can all be on the same page when working through design together!

Jan says

This is an essential cookbook on creating and presenting UX deliverables.

Peter says

I read this book mostly for the last section of the book on Design (truthfully, I skipped the first two sections). I was specifically interested in Site Maps and Wireframes. The info was light, and didn't talk as much about the process of creating the maps/wireframes as I would have liked, and when it did, I sorta disagreed with the approach.

I think the biggest disconnect for me was that the book felt like it was focused on being used in a waterfall-based environment, and I lean more towards agile perspectives.

John says

Went through the first 2/3 of the book in an hour. Nothing new for me, but a concise path through documentation of usability and strategy. Slowed down and read through last third on design of site including flow charts and wireframes. I like these chapters better than other books I've read on flow charts.

Sarah says

This one is for those with at least some experience in the web development field. It gets more technical. Lots of detail and personal experience tips from the author.

The author is a geek who loves comics and uses them in example and analogies throughout the book, which I thought I'd find endearing (I like them too), but instead, it was just kind of annoying.

Kev says

Awesome IA book.

Trevor Owens says

I first read this book in a Digital History seminar I took a decade ago. Just finished re-reading it for a Digital History seminar I'm teaching this year. It remains a fantastic introduction to the process of creating digital web projects.

While the technologies for creating web projects has developed significantly, this book ages well because it focuses on the process and methods of creating various deliverables in a design process. Students often come wanting to make a web site, or create some digital resource without realizing all the techniques and methods that can and should go into informing the development of a project.

Communicating Design continues to be an excellent hand book for thinking through project design and for focusing on what kinds of deliverables need to be produced at what point to get stakeholders on board.

Murray says

If you need to present ideas on a web site to others, this is your book. Covers the processes of creating web-related documents in a comprehensive manner. It's focused on the documents, but also lets you know how to approach them, what to watch out for, how they work with each other, and how they fit into the processes of developing and designing a website. It covers each document in a similar way and from a layered approach, rather than a 'always do it this way' style. It's easy to read, but there's a lot of insightful information to go over, so it's not an 'overnight' book.

Brian says

This book has some helpful sections, but altogether I did not find it very useful. The author presents a lengthy and detailed description of how to present Information Architecture project deliverables to clients, but it seemed there were few opportunities for flexibility in the process he describes. If you follow this model, you might end up creating deliverables that look and function like everyone else's. Maybe that kind of consistency is needed. You may decide for yourself.

This is a minor point, but I was also a little frustrated by the differences in nomenclature used in this book and Morville & Rosenfeld's Information Architecture (The Polar Bear book).

Assigned for the course SLIS 5960 - Information Architecture.
