

Drawing in Quicksand

Visual Systems, Drupal & The Modern Web World



About Me

- + Jason Pamental
principal, co-founder of h+w design
- + Have been a strategist, designer, developer & cat-pixel-wrangler since roughly the launch of Netscape 1
- + Can be found @jpamental in most places
- + Post thoughts, work & pics from Instagr.am @ hwdesignco.com



Let's Talk About Change

- + a Change in Drupal
- + a Change in Awareness
- + a Change in Process
- + a Change in the Web

in short: let's talk about Design

Changing Drupal

- + It's hard to steer a boat of 630,000
- + Focus on design led by Dries
- + Markup machismo by Morten
- + Mobile made first by John Albin
- + Pioneering UX led by Kevin Oleary

Focus on design, usability & the admin

Changing Awareness

- + The web is growing up (slowly & quickly)
- + Users don't just want to access — they want to *experience*
- + Tools like Drupal & Wordpress mean the next amazing site is one smart dropout away. You can't afford to suck

So what will make your site memorable?

Process Progress

- + The Decline & Fall of the Photoshop Empire
- + Tiles not Comps
- + Prototype, not promises
- + Never, *ever* use Arial again

So why do we still think in pages?

The Web Has Left the Building

- + It's in our pocket
- + It's on the couch
- + It's on our television
- + It's in the dash

So why do we still think 960 matters?

It's Time To Rethink Our Design Thinking

and Drupal will be our canvas

**because frankly, we can't
be certain of all that much**

So What *DO* We Know?

- + **Our Client**

(their business, their workflows, their pain points)

- + **Their Content**

(today's version at least)

- + **Drupal**

(our Swiss Army knife)

- + **Design**

(and that's more than coloring pixels)

**So if it weren't for Slide #3
we'd be all set, right?**

Not exactly.
(hurts, doesn't it?)

Know Your Client, Know Their Content

- + Knowing the business can highlight opportunities and adjacencies that lead to innovation
- + Design from the Content Out
(it's not just for buzzwords anymore)
- + Be prepared for change
- + Why? Because it's in a CMS

And Because Content Changes

- + We can define its structure
(both semantically and technically)
- + But we can't know its, well, **content**
- + That, by the way, is the point of a CMS
- + Here's where **design** gets *REALLY* important

A Perplexing Paradox

- + Hierarchy in structure of content is fairly static
(title is always important, image captions less so)
- + **Representation** of that hierarchy **changes**
with visual scale of the whole
- + UI must afford the **same controls** but
must adapt to the **mode of interaction**
- + These are **very different** things

Design & Web Standards, Sitting in a Tree (with Drupal)

Power to the People

- + and their Web clients
- + Since we don't know what that client is, the solution has to live there, not on the server (for now)
- + Drupal can help us deliver
- + Doing so from scratch can be hard

So don't do that.

Embrace the New World Order

- + Discover & Map
- + Know the content structure
- + Drupal as Prototype Engine
- + Style Tiles: develop the design vocabulary
- + Use your framework (built or borrowed)
- + Adjust design to maintain hierarchy at different scales

Paradox Lost

- + Give your device previews the squint test
- + Decode your apps: make a list, check the device — *what is it that delights you?*
- + Use conventions to build appropriately
- + Use Drupal to deliver one platform with many experiences

How, you ask?

We're Not Designing Pages

- + We're designing **systems** of **relationships** & **hierarchy** to infer **meaning** & **importance**
- + Good **design** has **structure** — but that structure **must be fluid**
- + Information & understanding **must hold true** no matter **how it's conveyed**

We're Designing Meaning

Psychology & Cognitive Science are The New Black

- + In order to **preserve meaning & reinforce understanding**, you must know how **learning works**
- + Once you know how **learning works**, you can tailor your **system of design**
- + That system of **visual & information hierarchy** can survive across **platforms & screen sizes**

Task-Appropriate Design is the OTHER New Black

- + A place for everything & everything in its place
- + But the place might be different on a phone... or in a car
- + As may be the importance of some tasks versus others



It's not the What but the Why & How

- + Josh Clark: '**I have some attention to spend**' — but how are they spending it?
- + @LukeW: with **one eye & one thumb**
- + There is **no mobile user** — there are only **mobile devices**
- + Tasks vary by circumstances of use (the **Why**)
- + **How** users **accomplish** those **tasks** varies by **device capability** (hover, touch, swipe)

Guess what?

Drupal Can Do That

- + Nothing we've discussed is impossible (or in some cases even very difficult) in Drupal
- + It just takes... Thought.
- + Carefully considered combinations of design patterns, themes & modules that leverage existing technologies & techniques can get you there

The Medium Is the Message

- + But **device capabilities** should dictate how you present it
- + **Hover** on a desktop aids exploration & speeds browsing
- + **Touching/swiping** on a small screen is more natural (but don't forget about fat fingers)
- + **Focus** of attention & **mode** of input **dictates** your **design** approach

**Makes the ‘thinking’ part
sound pretty important, huh?**

Why Harp on This?

- + Because designing a page in Photoshop is simply fantasy
- + Worse: designing just a page is only 1/400th of the answer (or less)
- + Even prototyping in static HTML only tells part of the story (though doing so responsively is a start)

Be Prepared

- + You know **design**
- + You know your **client** (or you should)
- + You know the **web** & what can be done on it
- + Don't stop looking, seeing & learning
- + Use **Drupal** to help
- + Design **meaning** not pages

Now Get Out & Go Make Something Awesome



Thank You!

Jason Pamental (@jpamental)
jason@hwdesignco.com

Resources

- + Mobile UI Patterns:

<http://mobile-patterns.com/dashboard-navigation>

- + LukeW's Multi-Device Layout Patterns

<http://www.lukew.com/ff/entry.asp?1514>

- + Navicon (blog post)

Jeremy Keith (excellent post w/lots of references)

- + StyleTil.es (website)

Samantha Warren (this is your start, then go Google)

Books

- + Responsive Web Design

Ethan Marcotte, A Book Apart

- + Adaptive Web Design

Aaron Gustafson, Easy Readers

- + Mobile First

Luke Wroblewski, A Book Apart

- + Don't Make Me Think

Steve Krug (really - you still have to read it)

- + The Design of Everyday Things

Don Norman (web usability learned from the design of doors)