

2007 WEB DESIGN SURVEY

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That the internet transformed our lives, personally and professionally, is beyond doubt or debate. It changed the way we communicate, altered social behavior, reshuffled the economy, democratized politics and opened the floodgates of information to a public that is only partly ready to deal with it. The impact has been good, bad, ugly and all points in between, with the final tally known only to the big web developer in the sky. Graphic design, as a reflection of culture and society, cannot help but be reshaped as well.

This new GDUSA reader survey takes an intentionally small bite out of this cosmic apple. Its aim is simply to establish the extent to which graphic designers are involved in the business of web design, what kinds of projects they are working on, whom the clients are and how designers feel about this work. Since this is the first time we have asked many of those questions, the answers serve as a benchmark for future polls that we intend to conduct on this topic.

Let's turn to the numbers.

73% ARE INVOLVED IN WEB DESIGN

73% of GDUSA readers report that they are now involved in web design or web maintenance projects. The previous highest response, in other surveys not dedicated to web design per se, was 62%. This places web design squarely in second place in terms of the kinds of projects that graphic design professionals have worked on in the past year, behind the perennial leader print and collateral, and ahead of such traditional and important staples as POP, sign design and package design.

NEW AND ONGOING

Graphic designers are engaged in several major activities. On top is the ongoing maintenance or refinement of existing websites, followed by creative design for new websites. A host of other related online activities — such as developing email marketing campaigns; providing the programming for sites; dismantling discontinued sites; setting up an e-commerce function for sites; and designing content for videos, mobile media and games — all generate measurable amounts of activity.

ABOUT 20% OF THE TIME

We asked how much time creative professionals who are involved in online design actually devote to web design within their busy and diverse professional mixes. The average: 20% of their time. As usual, averages often smooth out what are radical differences in behavior and experience. For example, at the high end of activity, 10% of GDUSA readers spend more than three quarters of their time on web design, while at the low end of activity, 10% of readers spend less than one hour in every 10.

CONSUMER AND BUSINESS SITES

We were also curious about the targeted audiences of web projects. Interestingly, there was a three way tie in terms of the general site orientation: business-to-business sites, business-to-consumer sites, and one's own company' firm' or agency's site. A small number of respondents, just under 10%, have designed a corporate intranet site. Delving deeper into the question of who are the clients for these sites, beyond the general "business-to-business clients" answer, the most common industry categories are healthcare and medical, food and beverage, publishing and media, and music, entertainment and sports.

CLIENTS FOR WEB DESIGN PROJECTS (In Order of Frequency)

Business-to-Business	Museums and Schools
Healthcare and Medical	Travel and Tourism
Food and Beverage	Hotels and Restaurants
Publishing and Media	Technology and Computers
Music, Entertainment and Sports	Transportation
Financial Services	Government and Non-Profits
Clothing, Fashion and Accessories	Real Estate
Consumer Electronics	Utilities and Telecommunications
Retail Stores and Malls	

TYPES OF DESIGN WORK

Print & Collateral	91%
INTERNET	73%
POP & Signs	68%
Packaging	58%
Broadcast/Multimedia	32%

TYPES OF ONLINE PROJECTS

Ongoing Website Maintenance	61%
New Creative Design	51%
Email Marketing Campaigns	50%
Upgrading Current Sites	43%
Website Programming	41%
Dismantling Discontinued Sites	38%
E-commerce Set-Up	22%
Content For Video/Mobile Media	17%
Game Design	4%

TIME SPENT ON WEB DESIGN

Up To One Quarter	39%
One Quarter To One Half	35%
One Half To Three Quarters	16%
Three Quarters Or More	10%



WHO IS THE AUDIENCE?

Business-to-Business	52%
Consumer	52%
Own Firm/Company	52%

TREMENDOUS GROWTH OPPORTUNITY

It is clear that web design has achieved mainstream status within the graphic design business. Nearly three out of four designers are involved in web design in their professional mix. Web is second only to print and collateral work, and designers collectively spend one out of every five hours on such projects.

WHAT DO PROFESSIONAL DESIGNERS MAKE OF THE MAINSTREAMING OF WEB DESIGN?

First and foremost, designers view web design as an important and challenging activity and as a growth opportunity going forward. Select comments that support this point follow:

Familiarity with web design is becoming essential. The internet is the number one way that companies communicate with customers. If that is where companies are going to spend their money and resources, designers need to adapt. I enjoy designing for the web as much as any other media. Not only does it require many of the same principals as print, but it adds a whole other level of interactivity.

— Stacy Lizzo, Studio 167, Vancouver WA

There is always a need for better graphic design, and it has become more common to “check out” a website than it is to pick up a magazine. We are in the midst of tremendous new growth — and new design challenges and opportunities.

— Robert Cooney, Robert Cooney Graphic Design, Santa Cruz CA

Web design is definitely a growth industry for graphic designers. Other media are more passé now that web design is coming to the forefront. It is more enjoyable to me, because of the versatility, and it is more effective, because of its popularity. We are doing more and more web design, because it is in demand.

— Linda S. Sharp, Sharp Associates, Long Beach CA

This is definitely a growth market. It is enjoyable to coordinate and create new ways to show products and services.

— David Hornung, Graphic Center, Fond du Lac WI

PART OF A BIGGER PICTURE

At the same time as they embrace the web, many designers are careful to note that it is one part of a complex communications puzzle. They often note the continued importance of print, packaging and point-of-sale in the mix. A few examples of this perspective follow:

The web is quicker, more immediate and more environmentally friendly than print. However, I do not think it will replace or match the tactility of paper anytime soon. I see the two — print and web design — working in tandem to create meaningful experiences over the next few years.

— Joe Gebbia, Juice Studios, San Francisco CA

Print is still in strong demand, and that will continue for some time. Print can be a very effective sales tool, especially when working together with the web and directing customers to a websites.

— Stephanie Schriger, Design & Graphics, Redmond WA

Every graphic designer should be well versed in both web and graphic design. Almost all of our clients who request a website design also have the need for collateral and other print materials.

— Tuee Chanthavong, Sol Design, Decatur GA

It's funny that this survey just arrived. I was just telling one of our interns today that he had better learn to love the web. While we focus primarily on identity, there is always a web component to our projects, and being able to offer expertise on all facets of a project makes us more competitive and more effective.

— Christopher Simmons, Mine, San Francisco CA

Yes, I believe the internet is becoming indispensable to the graphic designer's experience, since everything nowadays is web-related. Expanding one's web abilities opens a huge range of opportunities for today's designers.

— Giselle Lopez, Lopez Designs, Plantation FL

Web design is a growth opportunity for graphic designers. More and more, companies are realizing that a web presence is essential in today's competitive markets.

— Jose A. Mendoza, Renaissance Design Group, Santa Ana CA

This is definitely a growth opportunity that is enjoyable as well as challenging. It is effective, in that half the audience uses the web as a primary source of information, and it is mandatory that it be combined with traditional media to reach the entire market.

— Jeff Block, Adstaff, Neenah WI

Web design is not the growth opportunity that it was eight years ago. Still, it is extremely effective as a marketing tool. The model now is that web opportunities are an integral part of bigger brand projects.

— Martin Duffy, Johnston Duffy, Philadelphia PA

Web design can be as effective or, in some ways, more effective than print. But it succeeds for the same reason as print: good marketing and planning research. I think that less marketing and planning is done for the web because it is perceived as free, which makes a scattershot approach acceptable. I do web design for customers who do their homework.

— Jeanne Gomoll, Union Street Design, Madison WI

Web design is not only an extension of print but also an opportunity to combine print and motion. Designers cannot pigeonhole themselves into any one media.

— Greg McLaughlin, Windy City Gekko Design, Prospect Heights IL

I have been told that web design is the future and I disagree. People, young and old, still like a physical touch, whether it be the feel of a piece of paper or a packaged product. The web is convenient and simple but lacks the emotion you get from holding onto something.

— Tom Engle, Spect Designs, Cherry Hill NJ