

MEMORANDUM

TO: Dr. Candice Welhausen
CC: Dr. Derek Ross, Dr. Chad Wickman
FROM: Brandi Jean Jones
DATE: February 05 2020
SUBJECT: Website Redesign Project – Meta-Analysis (Document Design)

This memorandum, for the attention of my Masters of Technical and Professional Communication (MTPC) graduate committee, is to detail and analyze my completion of a website redesign project completed in Dr. Candice Welhausen's English 7080 course, Document Design.

This memorandum will detail the background of the project, the overall goal and execution of the project, and the rhetorical choices that I made as a technical and professional communicator to best serve the needs of my client.

Keywords: website redesign, visual rhetoric theories, principles of design

Background of Project

This website redesign project was completed collaboratively with a team member in Dr. Candice Welhausen's English 7080 course, Document Design, in Spring 2019. The project consisted of analyzing an existing website for a client, communicating with the client to determine their wants and needs, and redesigning their website (and other branding materials) using visual rhetoric theories and principles of design. This project was completed for the Alabama Council on Human Relations (ACHR), located in Auburn, AL. The tools used for this project included Adobe Illustrator, Photoshop, XD, and WordPress.

With this project, I was responsible for collaborating with my team member to redesign ACHR's website and other branding materials to better serve the needs of their users. Our focus for this project was to redesign the site using a new CMS, design new logo variations and a color scheme, and choose typography that better fits the needs of ACHR's audiences while providing a modern aesthetic.

Audience of Project

The primary audience of ACHR's website redesign project included:

- Caregivers/parents of children (Child Services)
- New fathers (Fatherhood Program)
- Homebuyers, owners, and renters (Housing Services)

The secondary audience of ACHR's website redesign project included:

- Volunteers
- Donors
- Accreditation teams

Goal and Execution

The goal of this project was to support ACHR by redesigning its website and branding materials to better serve their clients.

The ACHR website redesign project consisted of 4 separate phases, including:

1. Phase #1, Organization Analysis: creating an analysis that detailed ACHR's audiences, determining the pertinent information that was needed on the website, and using a "Keep, Kill, Combine, Modify" method to choose the information that would either remain, be combined, or deleted from the website.
2. Phase #2, Branding Board: creating new branding materials for ACHR that were based on the results of the Organizational Analysis. This branding board included logo variation designs, a new color scheme, and new typography.
3. Phase #3, Website Planning: constructing a site-map inventory of the existing ACHR site, creating wire-frame layouts, designing initial drafts of the site through WordPress, and producing a final draft of the site through WordPress.
4. Phase #4, Client Feedback & Publishing: meeting with ACHR to showcase the new website and rebranding materials, and publishing the new site.

Throughout the website redesign process, we relied on using the following visual rhetoric theories and principles of design best-practices, as detailed in each section.

ACHR Typography

We chose Museo (500) as ACHR's new typography for the logo, banner, and headings on both the website and rebranding materials. This choice was based on Brumberger's (2003) claim that typefaces suggest personas and that those personas should align with the purpose of the text. The existing text on ACHR's website was Comic Sans, which Brumberger's study classifies as a "friendliness" font (pp. 214). While we understood that ACHR was attempting to convey that their organization often caters to the needs of children, we recognized that this choice misunderstood the primary purpose and audience of their site, which is communicating important information to adults. Museo (500) better fits the needs of the primary audience: adults who are caretakers for children, not the children themselves. Additionally, Museo (500) is a serif font that is more "direct" (pp. 214) and professional in appearance while also being more friendly and playful than the typical serif.

ACHR Color Scheme

When redesigning the color scheme, we chose slate blue, orange, yellow, and beige. These choices were based on ACHR's existing website and branding materials, which were dominated by orange and yellow. We found the new color scheme to be complimentary, professional and engaging, while also appropriate for ACHR's adult audience. On their neutral emotion spectrum, Amare and Manning classify yellow and orange as "amused" and "stimulated" (pp. 80), respectively, which appeals to the energetic, child-oriented associations of ACHR. Blue is classified as "focused" (pp.

80), which helps suggest the reliability and professionalism that we believe that ACHR's audience is looking for.

ACHR Logo

We used ACHR's original logo as the foundation for our redesigned logo. The original logo featured two stick figure characters standing next to each other, with one floating slightly above and to the left of the other. We understood that this choice was meant to convey the human element of ACHR's organization and their commitment to helping people. Sturken and Cartwright (2009) claim that "ads set up particular relationships between the signifier (the product) and the signified (its meaning) to create signs in order to sell not simply products but the connotations we attach to those products" (pp. 276). We connected this claim with ACHR's branding logos. We aimed to attach ACHR's services (the signifier/product) to happiness and hope (the signified/meaning). To do this, we incorporated a sunrise (a symbol that is widely associated with new beginnings, the future, hope, and happiness) as the background of the logo and two characters as the central element. The organization name (Alabama Council on Human Relations) serves as another smaller frame that surrounds the characters.

Wireframe Layouts

The web redesign project consisted of creating a wireframe layout for every page before actually creating each webpage through WordPress. This process allowed us to decide beforehand the exact content we wanted on the redesigned site, instead of feeling compelled to fill the website with content from the existing ACHR site. With this process, we were confident that every piece of content had a purpose and place before ever moving it onto the redesigned website. While our final website redesign did not match our wireframe layouts precisely, they followed Garrett's (2010) concept of the importance of "accounting for the relative importance and grouping of elements presented in the wireframe" (Garrett, 2010).

Conclusion of Project

Upon completion of the project, we provided the website redesign project and branding materials to ACHR for review and publication.

Contact

If you have any questions or comments regarding the website redesign, please contact me at bjj0011@auburn.edu.

References

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