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Topic: Document content and design

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INTRODUCTION

When we talk about document design, realize that we are talking about the way that someone reads our text. The design of a document encourages a reader to view a text a certain way, to navigate a text in a certain way. Sometimes that is done using color. Other times it may be done using layout choices. At the end of the day, we're designing a document to be read a certain way and used a certain way, using design to help align the needs of the user with the text within the document.

- Document design as a component of technical writing continues to push further and further into the forefront of what it means to communicate effectively

- good design has been raised rapidly over the years and the minimum expectations of what a technical writer can do, and the value of being able to create good document designs, have risen

- The goal of all of this work is to support your design choices, nay even to make those choices, based on the information you have about your goals and your users/audience.

PAPER, PDF, AND BEYOND

- When you're doing document design, an essential choice is the venue for your document

- Are you going to be creating something that will be printed? Are you going to be printing something that is in color or black and white? Will this be on the web? Will it be on phones? Will it need to be multilingual? The choices are endless, but you need to know what type of document you're creating

- When it comes to design, the medium matters, some mediums cost more, some allow for more options and design moves, and some present more accessibility barriers than others.

STYLING TEXT AND QUALITY OF LIFE

- When you work with a large document, you often want to have a good selection of stylistic choices available to create signposts for your readers in the text

- Paragraph and character styles are tools built into most word processing suites that allow you to markup your text to allow the program to remember what type of styling you want to use for a particular segment of text (spacing, font, color, etc)

- Character styles tend to overwrite paragraph styles, allowing you to set up a particular font and spacing for your paragraphs and then selectively override the font when you have a single bit of text, such as a keyword, that you need to consistently look different.

IMAGES, VIDEO, ACCESSIBILITY, AND USE

- One of important area that we need to cover is the inclusion of images into your documents

- Images are more and more common, especially in digital deliverables that don't have to rely on being printed

- With the spread of high quality camera and camcorders via smartphones, almost anyone can take a quick photo or video that is impressive in quality versus anything available to the average person in previous decades

CONTI…

- When it comes to video, think about your composition and framing

- Images and video also introduce accessibility issues for some readers. To assist these readers, you'll need to give titles and alternative text for each of your images in digital deliverables

- This alternative text will allow a screen reader to read to your user whatever you consider to be a good description of the image that you've provided

DOCUMENT DESIGN

- The design of a document is first and fundamentally controlled by the layout of the text and images on the page

- The size and color of the text matters in how someone reads, as we'll get to in a moment, but layout controls what they encounter and when as they navigate in the traditional top-left corner and over and down manner

- Document design programs are designed as sandboxes for the creation of any sort of document you can think of rather than any particular type of document

CONTI…

- The amount of choices they provide and the lack of handholding go hand-in-hand with professional work where you want to create your design rather than spend your time undoing someone else's preconceptions of what a design should start with

- Designers tend to work to develop off of what is already there, it is much more rare to create something that is fundamentally unconnected to any previous design

- Design is a conversation more than anything, and when you contribute to the conversation you're building on what has already come before

DOCUMENTATION PLAN CHECKLIST

- Identify the content, format, page count, size etc for each document in your next publication cycle

- Prepare cost estimates for the project duration

- Schedule resources to meet the documentation requirements

- Have greater control over your budget and ensure that risks and issues are addressed before starting the writing phase

- Identify the necessary tools/licenses/PC configuration etc

- Ensure documents are scoped correctly with the appropriate level of detail

For more:
http://www.klariti.com/technical-writing/Document-Planning-Checklist.shtml
https://www.brighthubpm.com/monitoring-projects/102112-example-of-a-document-control-plan/

Thank you