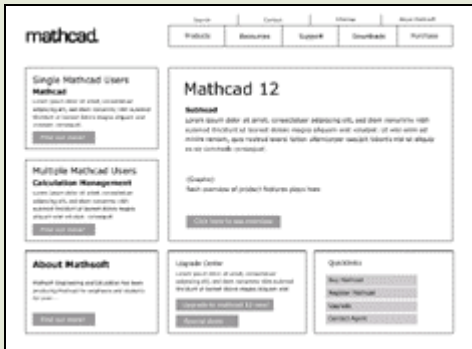




Wireframes: A Vital Step in Your Web Site Strategy

By John Reiss

As an integral part of the Web design and development process, Web site wireframes bridge the gap between information architecture, visual design, and marketing by proposing a user interface in black and white, void of any look-and-feel; thus removing potential distractions and focusing the attention of project stakeholders on pertinent functionality and strategic marketing factors such as navigation scheme, custom user paths, special promotions or services, and overall screen real estate.



Home Page Wireframe Sample

Wireframing is a process that can significantly decrease the amount of time required in design and development. By reducing the potential for discussions regarding graphics, layouts, databases, or images, and focusing on how the site will meet predetermined business goals and user requirements, unnecessary rounds of revision will be avoided. In fact, development time can be reduced by up to one-third (read “ColdFusion To Go” by Hal Helms).



Tertiary Page Wireframe Sample

At the wireframe stage, additional business goals are revealed, manifesting themselves through company assets and specific marketing endeavors. These assets must exist somewhere within the architecture and wireframing presents a perfect opportunity to literally “paint” with an architecture palette, exploring various scenarios that fuse vital company assets with marketing goals. After numerous variations have been explored through paper prototyping (a creative process that explores multiple scenarios through paper sketches), one



or two wireframes will be presented for each unique design template. Since most Web sites are comprised of not more than three templates (home page, secondary pages, and tertiary pages), the wireframe process is not daunting. It works in a simple, non-threatening language and draws various stakeholders onto the same page quickly.

Once wireframes have been defined and agreed upon, the transition into visual design will be much easier and efficient with significantly less back peddling.

To learn more about Barrett Communications' Web site design and development process and capabilities, please contact John Reiss, Director of Client Services & Marketing, via email at jr@barrett.com.