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Selected Book Review

Title: Web ReDesign 2.0: Workflow that Works
Author: Kelly Goto , Emily Cotler
Publisher: New Riders Press; 2 edition (December 10, 2004)
ISBN: 0735714339
List Price: $45.00 (available on Amazon for $20.00)

Have you, like me, ever:

- plunged into a web project without really thinking about the plan or the scope of the job?
- worked your way part way through a project and found yourself paralyzed in a swirling whirlpool of rewrites and redesigns?
- added the final touches of your website project and thought, "you know, if I had to do it over again, I'd do that differently."?
- said to yourself, "there's got to be some system out there that can help me work through a project in an orderly manner so I can focus on the work instead of how to manage and organize the task."

Not so long ago, I "hit the wall" in this area and started looking for project management guides to structure not what I did, but how I did it. Enter Kelly Goto and Emily Cotler.

What This Book Is Not

Right from the start, the authors tell you what this book is not about: coding, graphics, step by step how to on building a site, color theory, or detailed usability testing. It's how to plan the workflow: "when" to do

"what" in the most organized manner to avoid having to go back and rework the site over and over. Sure, you need to have some other resources to help you get the whole project completed: but with this book's forms as a backbone, nothing drops through the cracks.

The Best Parts of this Book

I'm a "to-do list lover" at heart and I thought the best part of this book is the customizable checklists, surveys, forms and even a spreadsheet to calculate my time and track my budget.

This book works with a team of 1 or more. It's easy to see how a simple project can require several skills so when you quote your price to your client, they can see item for item what the money is going to.

Goto and Cotler's Core process consists of 5 phases (each with sub phases under each)

- Define the project
- Develop Site Structure
- Design Visual Interface
- Build and Integrate
- Launch and Beyond

In each chapter there are applicable case studies and articles by industry experts. This intertwined with the bones of the plan make for a nicely rounded book. I found the detail to be just right for my needs.

I Use These Tools

A practical tool that I have used several times now is the client survey included in Chapter 3. When I get an inquiry about my services and prices, I like to respond by sending the potential client my version of the Client Survey. It is a two page questionnaire that the client must fill out that helps me evaluate their needs for a site. It proves to be an excellent screening tool. Page 43 of the book lists qualities of a good client and qualities of a "red flag client": one that may not necessarily be a nightmare, but has potential to be a problem. Clients that want to take shortcuts in the process to save money, have a small budget but need fast results, or that are indecisive and unable to articulate feedback could be problems down the road. I've found this a great tool to add to my "instinct" on which potential clients to pursue, and which to decline to bid.

Other forms that I use every project now have to do with defining project scope to identify client requests that reach outside of the agreed upon site definition, so you can send them a form for additional charges as they occur.

Other great tips in this book include:

- What to get your client to sign and what is an internal document for the team.
- How to reconcile the client's expectations with their budget.
- Scheduling, assigning team members and coordinating the

deliverables on paper.
- Content delivery plan clearly stating who is writing what and when is it due.
- Site mapping and developing flow charts for site structure.
- Establishing file naming conventions.

It Works in Real Life

So I put the book to the test. I implemented every form and spreadsheet in a small, one developer project I recently completed. It ran on budget and smoother than any other project I've ever done. I thought filling out the surveys and checklists would be time consuming but in fact they were time saving because tasks were finished in an orderly fashion and when they were needed to move on in the project.

The system works for me in small scale and within the last month I've become part of a larger team for a much bigger project. Am I coming to the table with my Goto/Cotler Web Redesign Tools? You bet. I think one of the biggest reasons our team won this project was the detailed communications brief I wrote that contained an exact accounting for the hours necessary for the budget we proposed. I know my team appreciates detailed communication of expectations and the client is delighted with a comprehensive plan with measurable goals and dated deliverables.

Conclusion

I found this book pertinent and applicable to my work. It's written by people way farther along in web development than I am but in a conversational tone that I could easily follow. It's like lunching with a mentor only you don't have to eat in a civilized manner.

This book delivered exactly what I needed to frame out my organization of tasks so I can focus on my code rather than have a nagging feeling in the back of my mind that I'm forgetting something. I had our public library purchase this book and after I borrowed it 4 times I realized it is a book I need on my desk every day, so I got my own. Get it: this Workflow *really* Works.

~ Karen Oeding

The web is ever-changing; this Core Process applies to all design and redesign projects, from the simplest to the most complex. Use this book as a mutable resource. Adapt it into a methodology that works for you. Call it a plan, call it a roadmap, call it a guide - we call it Workflow That Works, because that's what it is."--BOOK JACKET. Subject. Web sites -- Design.