



A Helping Guide to Web Design/Development Projects

About the Author

Seme Mojugbe has been involved in both Web Design & Development since 2006, with an emphasis on front end development (Photoshop, Xhtml/CSS & JQuery). To date, he has helped develop intuitive user interfaces and front end user experiences for established company products/services, individuals and small business, particularly in the financial and securities sector.

His core skills are in Photoshop, HTML, JQuery, CSS, & PHP, which together provide user-centric experiences, engaging user interfaces and web applications, and Web Branding.

Seme Mojugbe runs his outfit, **Web Jade Solutions**, as a freelance Web Consultant for individuals and small businesses. If you need help in creating an engaging experience that gives your site visitors a pleasurable experience, please view his portfolio at **<http://www.webjadesolutions.com/portfolio.php>** and feel free to contact him via the site.



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Who is this book for?

There are millions of web designers/developers out there, and making an informed decision on who to hire is quite a daunting task. Although this book **serves the potential customer as a checklist** for selecting such a professional, it is also **a handy book for web designers and developers to ensure all a client's concerns are catered for.**

Why is this important?

Few web developers ever realize that at the end of the day, one singular question is always tugging at the mind of the client - "Is this the right decision?" This question is never answered immediately. Rather, it is answered over a period of **reassurance**, meeting **milestones/expectations**, and keeping the **client duly informed at all times** (within what is reasonable). This extra effort is key in ensuring satisfaction, and hopefully referrals.

If you're interested in sending feedback to this EBook, feel free to do so at www.webjadesolutions.com

What is this book about?

This mini-book will highlight the various problems that plague the web design/development process. It will also explain the **undesired effects and how to deal with them**. Given that any project usually includes more than a single person, this book will prove useful to both the client and the professional.

Issue: Project Content.

Not planning the project/content scope for the project is a recipe for disaster– picture the scenario below:

“just start the designs. I’ll give you more content as soon as i can get it” or “Just go through our brochure and see what you can use”.

The problem with this is that the minute you go this way, you can almost kiss the project’s completion goodbye. Once the developer and client don’t initially agree on the content, the project is bound to go through many revisions – with the client tweaking as he/she likes. “Change this paragraph.” “Remove that, I don’t like it”. A vicious cycle indeed

Solution:

You need to understand how **important it is to have and agree on FULL CONTENT** before your developer even hits a keystroke. You ask for a **Content Guide**. They’ll thank you for it, and the project will most definitely benefit from it.

Issue/Problem: Login URL on homepage.

This is a common issue. Some clients insist that a direct URL to the *site’s webmail be placed on the homepage*. Of course, this is purely from a convenience point of view. After strongly advising against this, I sought the advice of a colleague and found there are more dangers to this practice. Displaying the direct URL from the homepage exposes the webmail to hacking attempts like brute-force and phishing, not to mention having unauthorized access to confidential data. Unless it is absolutely necessary, it is often discouraged

Solution: Enlighten the Client

Sit the client and explain the dangers of such a desired but bad practice. Explain that minimizing the knowledge of where the webmail resides minimizes the risk of exposure. Ask him to weigh the convenience in one hand vs the security by hiding the webmail from normal visitors

Note:

Sometimes, examples like yahoo (or school portals) have been cited, that they DO have the webmail URL on the homepage. **These are services that require some form of registration, which is why they can afford to do that, as opposed to say a company website. This is the core difference**

Problem - Domain Name & Hosting:

Registering a domain name with hosting will always be a tricky affair if not done properly. The typical scenario is for a designer to register a domain/hosting on behalf of the client. While this might be normal/expected, it has more drawbacks than benefits:

1) Unless a client is well-informed (which happens rarely), beyond having a domain name, you're in the dark about your site. Most clients barely have an idea of which hosting company is storing their files, or handling their domain.

2) **As a result of this ignorance, the client can be exploited.** You can type your domain name and your site shows today, but what about tomorrow? And what if your files/database are packed along with hundreds of other sites that reside in a dusty server in someone's backyard, so a certain designer could "cut corners"? (The cheaper the designer/developer is paid, the higher this tendency - assuming they touch even your project)

3) **Consider the consequences** of having your **site down/inaccessible** because of **(1) & (2)**. You lose your files, your domain, your emails/correspondences, records (imagine if you're a big company that offers web-based value services). You can only lose so much. Which brings me to:

4) **Yes - Denial.** If you're at (3), chances are you have seen the light and want someone else to design your site. **You then make the rational (but ill-fated) request of demanding access details to the server hosting your site. Any quack designer/developer on the street knows the gig is up at this point, and will most definitely refuse to release these details.** The only option at this point is to create a new domain. I've seen this happen countless times. As if that's not enough, imagine **a searching visitor finds 2 URLs to the same company - what will they think?**

Solution:

1) **Starting hunting for a good Webhost.** Fire them with any questions you might have, concerning what features best suit your needs. Let them explain everything for you - any good host will do this. For me, I personally use Syskay (www.syskay.com) for all my projects – and I say this because I have learnt firsthand crisis from a non-capable host.

2) **Register your domain yourself.** No exceptions. Not only are you in charge of your intellectual property (which could be worth millions in the future if you choose to sell you domain), but you get notified before it expires - or before anyone tries to buy it from you. You get "right of first refusal".



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3) In the event you were unlucky to have your domain "locked down" by some quak - either have an order on it after the expiry date - or go the legal path. **It is your online property!**

Problem: Clueless Clients

There are a lot of people who need websites but are clueless as to how to go about it. The following is a non-exhaustive list of what could happen (and has happened before) as a result of this:

1) Exploitation:

A clueless client will take anything he/she is given at first glance, provided it is appealing enough. The **focus then is on the design** instead of the goal/functions/purpose of the project. The developer/designer can take advantage of this scenario, but the client still has an idea of what he wants, and if he is not guided, a client can/will subject the project to numerous revisions if the project doesn't achieve the intended goals. The result is wasted time, project creep, demoralization, and bad blood.

2) No Expectations: Similar to (1) above, this refers to **properly defined/measurable goals**. No expectations means a client can just have a site with content and not make anything out of it. The result is a project that just shows everyone you have a website. That's it. Experience has shown that this outcome tends to repeat itself - "we need a new website" – sound familiar?

Solution (to 1 and 2):

a) THE CLIENT MUST DO HIS HOMEWORK: Browse sites that appeal to you. **Ask yourself why.** Find out the functions that they have that **are relevant to your business**, and strip them down the most important/necessary. For instance, if you want an online store that delivers T-shirts, there's a high chance you won't need all the functions of a site like e-bay or Argos. Having your own list of functions not only helps the developer/designer produce a design that is based on your needs, but also **forces you to keep your business logic in mind during the initial phases of the project**. It also helps bring down the potential cost of the project when only the essentials are thought out

b) BE PART OF THE PROJECT:

It always pays to be part of the project. Brainstorm the process flow of your website with your designer/developer, and you'll not only correct time-wasting errors/misconceptions/assumptions, but streamline the project development and increase overall quality. You'll be surprised how smooth things will go with a little planning ahead



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c) MEASURE: have a timeline that both you and the designer/developer are comfortable with the duration of the project. Also have a list of clearly defined/realistic objectives the project must achieve. For example, you might want 1000 people to use your site every month, but if you want to achieve that immediately the site launches, that might not be realistic. While some objectives might take time (like search engine optimization, and social branding), there has to be a realistic time metric by which it is achieved.

d) communication,communication,COMMUNICATION!!

"Doubt grows by the day". If a client is in doubt for any reason, it will most likely double everyday - Its typical human behavior. So within what is reasonable/professional (and within favorable circumstances), if a client has to try more than once to reach you, thats a minus. if you at the very least send an email stating you are currently not available, and will (if and when you can) get back to them at a specified time, that's a double plus. Nothing says peace of mind than always keeping your client informed.

Following the Competition

Understanding the competition is good, especially because it helps you make informed decisions. Where this understanding ends is where the problem starts. Without truly understanding what is going on, *too many people are doing the same thing*. Social networks, online forums, blogs, news site and portals are increasingly and intensely fighting for our attention, and we only have the option of filtering what is most important to us. Who will do the buying if what EVERYONE is doing is SELLING?

If you have a desire for an online web service or web community, ask yourself where the VALUE is for the VISITOR. If it is 'just another online forum', it is not going to be sustainable, just because you found a free web script to power your website. Maintaining anything on the web might not require a lot of money (which is one of its advantages), but it definitely requires skill, TIME, a thought out plan, and patience.

Solution: Take the best of what you need.

Having this at the back of your mind will go a long way in the planning. Examples:

1. Does your site need a blog, or a Web forum? If you have a product you want to market online, a blog might help establish a closer connection between the brand and its users. Advertisers use Facebook pages to target their audience. If it's a web service, a forum could help foster independent discussion and insightful feedback
2. If you want an online store, 2 make-or-break factors besides VALUE are **online payment** and **delivery**.
 - a. Online payment isn't something that should be taken with levity. On a massive scale, card holders are uninformed and vulnerable to scams and exploitation. A good support system for online ATM purchase is mandatory, as well as having a brand impression of genuinity.
 - b. An offline delivery system for any online store is now the norm for any potential online customer. For small products mostly of individual sales, this is very feasible. Examples of such models are delivery systems via motorcycles in cities. For larger items, a partnership with a courier is an option worth considering



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The take home point is that you need to understand what's best for your business before plunging into the competition.

Issue: Swayed Impressions

I have seen this before: A client is presented with a mock design he/she immediately connects with. The mockup is approved, the project is live, and then 2 weeks later the little changes start trickling in. A little change here and there, and before long the project suffers for it, and both parties are at loggerheads.

Remember what the client is always asking himself? "Is this the right decision?"

Let's take a scenario that ***can (and has happened) before.***

1. The client is shown a mockup
2. The client approves, and the project is delivered
3. The client shows his project to potential buyers/visitors/stakeholders
4. Let's say some give feedback, some of which *are not positive*. Reasons can vary:
 - a. The project is presented to someone who sees an opportunity to convince the client to change developers
 - b. The project is presented to someone who, rather than praise the project, would poke at or create "imperfections" with the design.
 - c. Other reasons range from direct but non-intentional to subtle and suggestive
 - d. Client begins to have **second thoughts**
 - e. **'Minute' Changes** start to be requested.

NOTE: There are (of course) situations where future changes are required after a project is live. The emphasis here is on how little things like these can change the client's impression. Experience has shown that web design is a very cut-throat business, and given little knowledge the client has makes him vulnerable to being swayed.



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Solution: Take the client by the hand, and make him an informed client

1. Compare the mockup with the competition, highlighting areas that are key and are on par with the set standard. This boosts the client's confidence in the design and enables him to stand by it
2. Explain your approach to the client so he understands what happens 'behind the scene'. He will not only appreciate the effort, but respect you for it. Explaining how the difference between a 2 column layout and 3 column layout optimizes the content for the client's project is an example of such. Of course, **how you relay this to the client is entirely at your discretion**

And finally, the key to success for any website

It is one of the most important aspects of having a website (if not the most important). It is the reason why people come to yahoo everyday and Facebook has a page rank of 9 (in lay man terms the higher the pagerank, the greater the reputation of the page). It is the reason why so many fail and few truly succeed in the web industry.

What is it? In a word - **Value.**

If your website has **undeniable value, people will come to you.** People will trust you. People will be willing to PAY for your services, and the good old word-of-mouth on the internet will take you places. Yes, pushing such a site still requires effort, but having a solid offer a visitor cannot refuse pays out in the long run. **It is equally important how this value is perceived.**

So I ask you, **before you ask for a website,** to ask yourself "What value will my website bring to it's visitors?" This will vary for many people, ranging from an online presence (Branding), to specific information that can't be found elsewhere (like news information about a region that is scarce and knowledge about such a place is in demand). The possibilities are only limited by you are willing to offer.

Part of the problem (and, depending on the type of project, the worst mistake any client can make), is expecting the developer/designer to think this out for you. This is not only wrong, but counter-productive. If you didn't bother to properly brainstorm what value you intend to add your website, why should the developer? Or the visitors coming to your site?

This, however, is not to be confused with professional consultation. For instance, if you need a website to highlight the benefits of a physical product you are pushing into the market, you need to establish a clear benefit for people to come to your site (an incentive). **You could consult with a developer's on how best to translate these value adding incentives to a website,** in the best experience for the user. And such a thing is by no means cheap.

In such a case, examples of such incentives for using the website follow below:

- Get a significant discount
- Free complementary goods (that work with the product)
- Referring friends before the order is completed (word of mouth via multiple channels - email, phone numbers, companies, etc)

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The following incentives combined with selling the product online (assuming good quality/value) potentially yield the following:

- Visitors save more online - more traffic.
- Buyers refer people who might be interested (leading to more leads and consequently, more sales)
- Adds more to the bottom line (sales/profit)
- More information on the buyer profile, and how to maximize your niche (for example database stats indicate people in managerial positions are most likely buying customer. Services such as Google Analytics handle this very well)
- Good feedback (good reviews, testimonials, site popularity, etc)

In summary, contrary to popular opinion, **finding value adding incentives for a website should be the CLIENT's responsibility.**

In the long run, it always pays to be informed. The same applies for web projects

And now a good treat if you've read this far....



I hope you have benefited immensely from taking the time to read this mini-book from start to finish. But it gets better.

You know the saying "Talk the talk, walk the walk"? Well, before writing this book, it occurred to me that while everything in this book is appreciated, it would be much better if I set an example that you can relate with. And this is how "**Kolejo**" was born

Kolejo, translated from Yoruba, means "It is not hard". **Kolejo is a content management system** I built, keeping in mind clients with **simple but important needs** (and the points iterated in this book). A content management system is a web application that helps you manage your website with minimal assistance! So you get an outstanding web design with a simple to use and robust management system.



Kolejo is also great for the following:

- Launching a book (with sharing news/site for social networks)
- Managing a small business web presence
- Managing a personal site

Just to show you how it works, I have setup a Kolejo powered website. It's a fictional gift based company called **Redheart**. You can view it here:

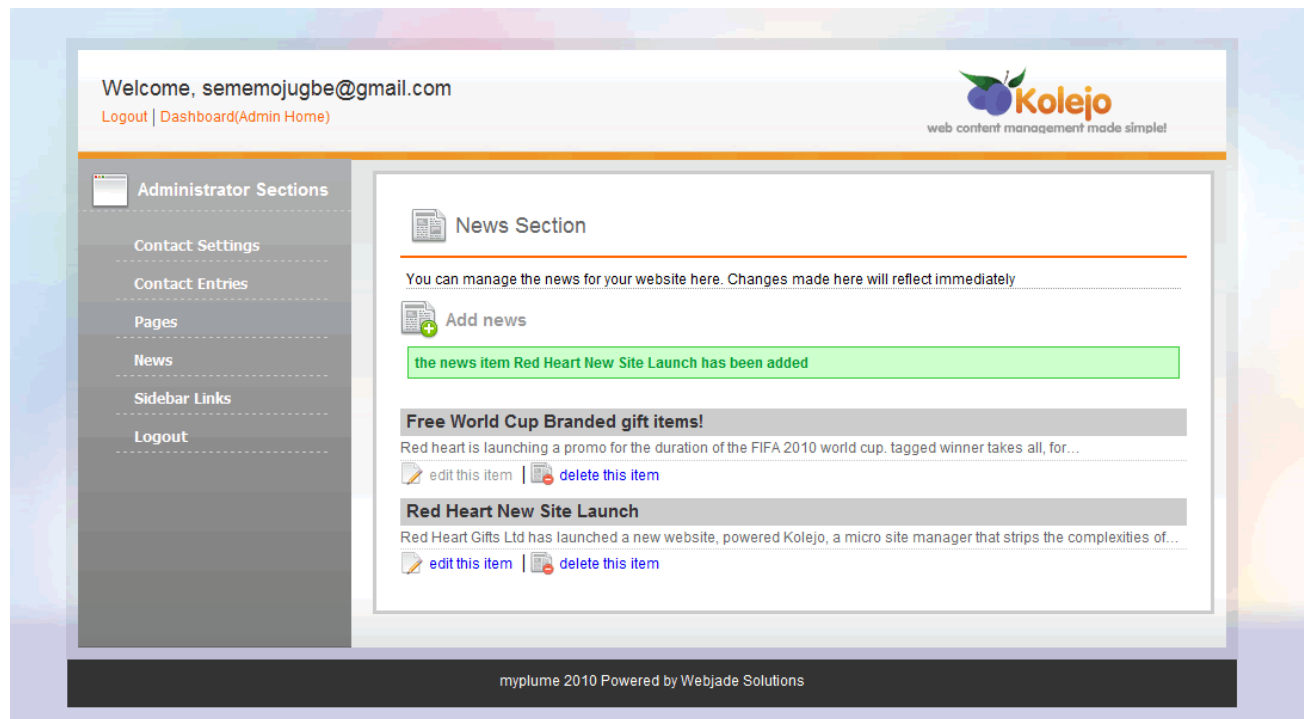
<http://www.webjadesolutions.com/redheart>

If you want to see how Kolejo powers this site, you can request for a **beta test account**. **Just fill the contact form on the site, state you're interested in how Kolejo works, and you will be given a beta test account to see it in action, usually within 24hrs.**

So if you need a website with no fuss, think **Kolejo** "Its not hard".

For more information, head to www.webjadesolutions.com/kolejo.php

Screenshots:



The screenshot shows the admin interface of a Kolejo-powered website. At the top, it says "Welcome, sememojugbe@gmail.com" with links for "Logout" and "Dashboard(Admin Home)". The Kolejo logo and tagline "web content management made simple" are in the top right. A left sidebar lists "Administrator Sections" including Contact Settings, Contact Entries, Pages, News, Sidebar Links, and Logout. The main content area is titled "News Section" and contains a message: "You can manage the news for your website here. Changes made here will reflect immediately". Below this is an "Add news" button and a green notification box stating "the news item Red Heart New Site Launch has been added". There are two news items listed: "Free World Cup Branded gift items!" and "Red Heart New Site Launch". Each item has "edit this item" and "delete this item" links. The footer of the dashboard reads "myplume 2010 Powered by Webjade Solutions".

Welcome, sememojugbe@gmail.com
[Logout](#) | [Dashboard/Admin Home](#)

Kolejo
web content management made simple!

Administrator Sections

- Contact Settings
- Contact Entries
- Pages
- News
- Sidebar Links
- Logout

Easy to get on top of things

you can start with easy navigation on the left

Or jump to a quick task to get something done (news, page, sidebar)

See the latest sample on who's filled your contact form.

[Don't show this again](#)

Site Messages

From: Ade Master
ademaster25@yahoo.com
Phone: 08054967316
Comment: This is the major point!
[More Messages](#)

Quick Tasks

- Add News to site**
Having updated news makes your site relevant and fresh. Kolejo also lets your visitors share your news on facebook and Myspace.
[Add news to site](#)
- Add a new page**
You can add new page for your website. Adding a new page shows the name of the page in the navigation.
[Add a new page](#)
- Add a sidebar link**
Most websites have a set links for partner websites or sites relevant to yours. Make sure they link back to you though!
[Add sidebar link](#)

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