Project Plan for www.doebay.com Website Redesign

Team members: ….,
Stakeholders: Joe & Maureen Brotherton, Doe Bay Resort & Retreat Owners

Project Description

Purpose

Doe Bay Resort & Retreat is a resort located on Orcas Island. Resting on over thirty-three acres of pristine waterfront property, Doe Bay has a variety of accommodations set in a rustic, down-to-earth environment. Currently, their web presence at www.doebay.com receives an average of approximately 10,000 hits per month from new and returning customers looking for a unique getaway. Since the website is often the first experience visitors have with Doe Bay, the site should match the beauty and serenity of the property, instead it is ill-matched and its design, interface, and navigation are cold, blocky, and awkwardly structured.

Our team will redesign the site using some of the keywords from Doe Bay's property description: "rustic," "down-to-earth," "unique," "retreat," and "pristine" as our compass to build a site that will not only allow users to quickly find what they're looking for, but will make them *want* to come to Doe Bay Resort & Retreat and then return to the site later to reminisce about the time they had. We also want to bring a sense of the community and "cool factor" that the owners so passionately talked about in our initial interview with them. The website should convey what Doe Bay is like, its uniqueness, special features, and its welcoming, community feel.

Background and rationale

The Doe Bay website was last redesigned in 2007. Due to budget constraints, the redesign did not involve user input, or usability testing. The website redesign project will employ user-centered design (UCD) methods to address the current navigation and design issues with the current site. It will also try to address some of the design goals that the owners have in mind that could not be accomplished in the previous redesign.

Goals

The goal of the redesign is to address the usability issues of the current website, and create an online experience that users and stakeholders will find engaging. Through our research and redesign work, our team will meet the following goals:

1. Create a more efficient navigational system
   a. Users should be able to navigate to their goal within 3 clicks
   b. Reduce navigational clusters to create an environment that is easy to learn

2. Redesign the look and feel of the site in a way that incorporates the keywords of the business statement
   a. Website is reflective of the property location
   b. Users will use words that reflect the business statement when asked about their online experience

3. Incorporate social media to engage users and meet current business requirements
   a. Doe Bay staff can reach potential customers by using social media incorporated throughout the site
   b. Users can interact with Doe Bay staff using social media found throughout the site

4. Optimization of certain site areas

a. Promote wedding and event planning services
b. Promote cafe and integrate garden and WWOOF-ing (guests participating in the [World Wide Opportunities in Organic Farms](#) program)
c. Promote campground

Users

Based on a preliminary review of the website and an interview with the stakeholders, our team assumes the following about doebay.com user-types.

User type	Description	Task
The Happy Camper	The Happy Camper is looking for a camping experience that gives them just the right amount of nature, combined with the right amount of access to amenities like showers, restrooms, hot tubs, an onsite café, and general store.	Find information about camping – camping spots, amenities, accommodation pricing, availability, and make a reservation.
The Naturalist	The Naturalist is concerned about the earth, wants to eat local, vegetarian, and organic food. They want to vacation somewhere that shares their values, while having a low impact on the Earth's resources.	Find information about yurt accommodations and locations, accommodation pricing, availability, and make a reservation. Look up information about the café, menus, and onsite garden.
The Family	The Family wants a safe place for their children to frolic in the forest and at the beach. They want affordable lodging with easy access to amenities like showers and restrooms. They plan to stay onsite and are looking for available activities to keep their children busy.	Find information about cabin accommodations and locations, accommodation pricing, availability, and make a reservation. Look up information about onsite activities, and the general store.
The Newlyweds	The Newlyweds are from back east, but heard that Doe Bay is the best place to host a destination wedding in the Northwest.	Find information about how to get to Doe Bay, reserving the resort for family and friends, catering, accommodations, possible activities
The Foodie	The Foodie has an ardent interest in not only eating good food, but also learning everything they can about the food they are eating. They are coming to the Doe Bay Cafe because they've heard about the amazing dishes being served there.	Find information about the cafe chef, cafe menu, onsite garden, and WOOFing program.

Project approach

The goal of the redesign is to increase traffic to the website and increase awareness of the special features and amenities at Doe Bay Resort among its target audiences. This in turn should lead to increased reservations.

Methods

Following are some of the research methods that we will use to help inform the redesign.

1. Comparative Analysis
Identify the strengths and weaknesses of Doe Bay's competitors and define a list of issues to address in our redesign.

2. Web Analytics
Measure the strengths and weaknesses of the current website. The web analytics data will help narrow down the important issues to address in the redesign. It will also be used once the redesign is complete to measure before/after redesign impacts (though this part is outside the scope of our project).

3. Surveys
Collect feedback from the users of the website through questionnaires and validates some of the findings from the competitive analysis and web analytics. We will be using Doe Bay's Facebook and Twitter accounts as well as its email newsletter to solicit responses to our survey.

4. Card sorting
Revise the information architecture (IA) of the site by conducting a card sort to discover how users group related elements together, helping us to define a user-centered IA.

5. Prototypes
Based on the information gathered from the comparative analysis, surveys, and IA design we will create working prototypes that will more closely reflect the final look and feel of the website.

6. Usability Testing
Conduct usability testing of the working prototype with participants who fit Doe Bay's user profiles, and calculate the success metrics of the redesign.

Deliverables

Following are the deliverables of the website redesign, which will be completed throughout the UCD life-cycle.

1. Project Plan
The first deliverable is this document, the project plan, which gives a high level overview of the site, its business goals, target audience and redesign goals, our methods to gather the data needed to redesign the site in a user-centered way, along with the schedule, scope and deliverables.

2. IA Diagram
After we get approval on the redesign proposal, we will work on the flow of information in the website, the outcome of which will be the information architecture diagram.

3. Wireframe/Prototype
Based on our research methods we will come up with the prototype of the redesigned website. This will start with a set of wireframes of the redesigned architecture, page types and content, and conclude with a working prototype of the new site.

4. Usability Testing and Results Report

Once the digital prototype is ready, we will run usability tests of it with target users to determine if the redesign meets the business and user goals.

5. Redesign Report/Presentation

The final deliverable for this project will be the redesign report that summarizes what we did from the beginning of the project to the final redesign. The methods used and how the design decisions were made based on research will also be available in the report. In addition, part of the final report will be a PowerPoint presentation that describes the redesign project briefly.

Budget

The budget for the website redesign project includes:

1. Web testing software subscription. ($5)

Schedule/Timeline

Deliver by	Deliverables
7/7/2011	Project Proposal
7/21/2011	User task matrix and personas
7/28/2011	Information architecture diagram
7/28/2011	
8/4/2011	Digital prototype
8/4/2011	Usability test scenarios
8/11/2011	
8/11-8/15	
8/17/2011	
8/18/2011	Web site

Stakeholders & Stakeholder Communication

Primary Stakeholder: Joe Brotherton, owner
Secondary Stakeholder: Maureen Brotherton, co-owner

Communication plan

We will provide regular email updates on our progress to Joe and Maureen, will meet in person with Joe and Maureen again if needed or on the phone, and present each deliverable to them.

Scope

In scope

- Improved site navigation
- Improved Information architecture
- Improved user flow
- New homepage design
- New sub page design template
- Social networking integration
- Search engine optimization

Out of scope

- Ecommerce functionality
- Writing of content

Team Roles & Responsibilities

- … – development, design, and search engine optimization
- … – user research and information architecture; development assistance
- … – design & development assistance
- … – user research and information architecture.
- … – information architecture and project management

Team communication methods include (but are not limited to): email, in-person team meetings, meetings with client.

Assumptions and constraints

Assumptions

- Team will have access to:
    - stakeholders - Joe Brotherton and Jamie (resort manager)
    - current site analytics through Google Analytics
    - content, video, photos we can use to update the site

- Joe Brotherton is the main point of contact.
- Joe will allow us to administer a survey can be administered to Doe bay followers using Facebook, Twitter, and the Doe Bay newsletter.
- Pages on the new site will have the ability to be easily updated by Joe and Maureen.
- Joe and Maureen will let us know what content they no longer want on the site.

Constraints

- This is a busy time of year for Joe and his staff as it's the high season at the resort; they will make themselves available as much as possible.

Comparative Analysis

Our team reviewed four competitive sites: three comparable resorts and one restaurant comparable to the Doe Bay Café. This gave us valuable insights into features, information architecture, content, design and usability to consider and to avoid in our redesign of Doe Bay's site. The key take-away from this exercise was that Doe Bay's current site is well-designed when compared with the competitive sites we examined. We took several lessons on what not to do in the redesign from the sites we visited, as well as good ideas for features that would improve Doe Bay's current site. Below is a summary of our findings:

Lessons Learned

- Focus on key tasks the user will need to do on the site
- Reduce clutter and provide only relevant information.
- Keep it simple, yet make it engaging. There is nothing less appetizing than a boring restaurant site.
- Have only a single level of navigation to make it easy to access information.
- Make the website engaging by choosing an interesting color and theme.
- Add the reservation system right on the homepage, as that is most common scenario.

- Photos are really important to showcase what a resort has to offer – don't skimp on them, and do allow them to be viewed larger.
- Ensure that photography is professional-looking and engaging otherwise it makes the entire resort look amateurish
- "Cute" features which don't work and detract from the main tasks on the site should be avoided
- Content strategy is important – long paragraphs of text do not work.
- Make sure that social media integration doesn't look like an afterthought – it needs to be baked into the overall design and flow.

Appendix: Competitive Analyses

Organization	Rosario Resort and Spa
URL	http://www.rosarioresort.com/
Review conducted by	…
Audience	Vacationers, outdoor enthusiasts, boaters, couples, families, wedding parties
Screenshot(s)	
Architecture & navigation	There are 2 rows of navigation elements at the top and bottom of the image in the home page, which is not very intuitive to the user. Too much of information in the home page, makes it look unorganized and confusing to the first time user.
Visual audit	The site looks bland and dull and looks too much like a news site rather than a resort website.

Not too much design elements to distract the user from the home page.

Special features & supported tasks	Newsletter signup is easy and available on the home page. Will be more useful if that option is available once the user makes a reservation or drills down to the lodging section of the website.
	The gift certificate option on the home page is commercially savvy and not too in your face.
Design and usability notes	The most important task in a resort website: availability and booking, is available right on the home page and easy to use.
	There is not too much of design elements to distract the user; at the same time, the color and layout of the site is bland and not engaging.
Considerations for final project	Reduce information overload right in the home page and have only information that attracts user's attention and those needed for the most important tasks on the home page.
	Have only a single level of navigation, unlike the top and bottom navigation bar in this website.
	Make sure that there are no dropdown menus, so that the navigation is compatible when viewed from a mobile device.

Organization:	Smuggler's Villa Resort, Orcas Island, WA
URL:	http://www.smuggler.com/
Review conducted by	…
Audience	Vacationers, boaters, weekend warriors, families
Screenshot(s)	

Architecture & navigation	There are some very basic web usability heuristics that are violated: 1. The main navigation on the left is cut off and not visible in its entirety until you scroll down 2. There is not a lot of content on the site yet things are relatively hard to find. 3. Seems like the top tasks would be – rates, pictures of rooms and booking. Yet those 3 links are not prominent and in the case of the booking link it's in a completely separate area. 4. Home is at the bottom of the navigation, should be on top
Visual audit	Almost all images suffer from 1. Not engaging enough 2. Amateurish 3. In the case of the main image, an aerial shot, it's really hard to tell what it is (or why they would use the image and the main image The visual esthetic on the site is amateurish and not professional. Nothing about

	the images would make me want to stay at this resort.
Special features & supported tasks	Smugcam – a web cam that refreshes images every 30 seconds. Cute idea but it requires java and doesn't really work all that well.
	The booking tool, which is on a different website, looks amateurish and probably has some usability issues (not a part of this review though since it's on a different site)
Design and usability notes	I found the breaking up of the paragraph on the homepage by two images to be especially jarring.
	There are two different links for 'deals' and they go to different places with different discounts – links which appear to be the same thing a) shouldn't be duplicated and b) should at least go to the same place with the same information
Considerations for final project	Focus on key tasks the user will need to do on the site
	Ensure that photography is professional-looking and engaging otherwise it makes the entire resort look amateurish
	Cute features (e.g. smugcam) which don't work and detract from the main tasks on the site should be avoided

Organization:	Allium Restaurant in Eastsound
URL	http://www.alliumonorcas.com/
Review conducted by	…
Audience	Restaurant diners, foodies
Screenshot(s)	
Architecture & navigation	Fairly simple and straightforward top navigation Few pages
Visual audit	Two images on main page – one is engaging (a sunset scene) the other (a picture of the sign) is not so engaging Overall a pleasant visual experience but not amazing

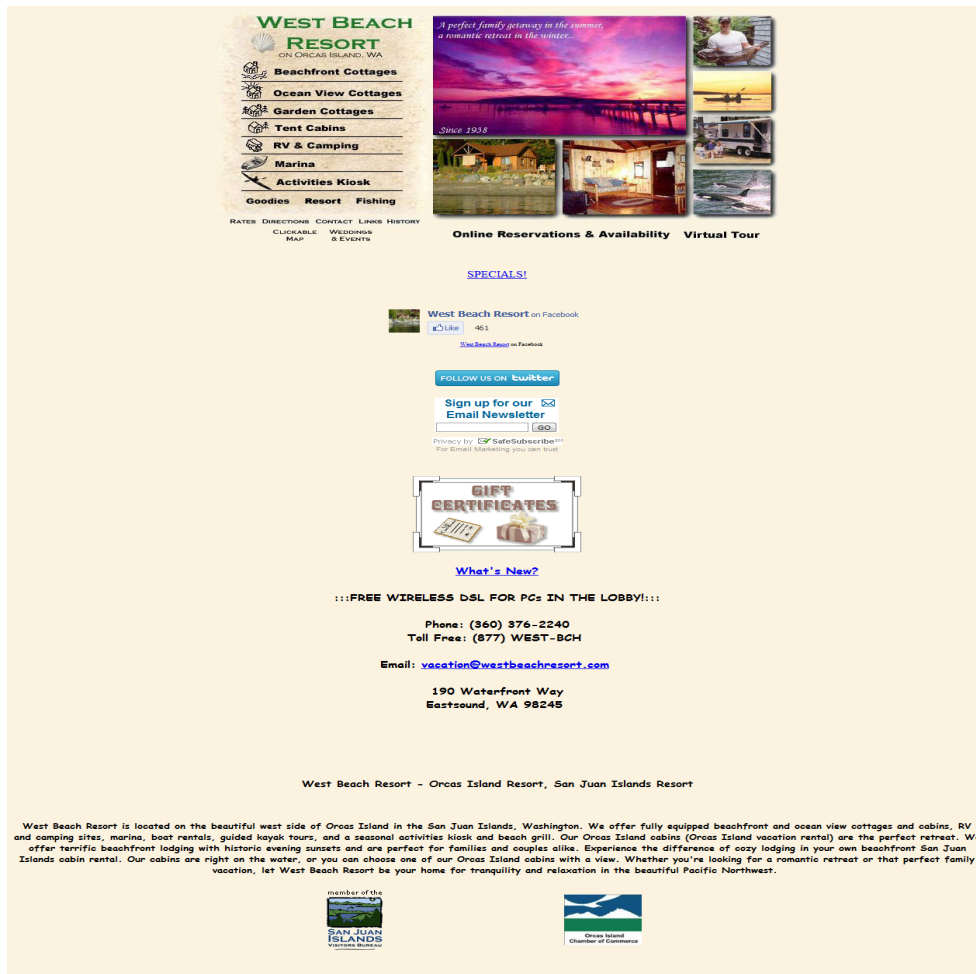|	
Special features & supported tasks	There is no link to make a reservation
	Relatively static. No special features. This site is more like a brochure.
	The social media share module is jarring and obviously an add on which detracts from the overall page esthetic. There is also a second share feature on each page which is a potential usability issue.
Design and usability notes	Under contact us, the page says 'our policies' which is confusing Observation
	The links show a partial underline, which is strange.
	When you click on menu you get another link, which takes you to the menu. This violates navigation on other pages which host content directly.
Considerations for final project	Keep it simple, yet make it engaging. There is nothing less appetizing than a boring restaurant site. There is nothing on the Allium website which would make me want to eat there.
	Make sure that social media integration doesn't look like an afterthought – it needs to be baked into the overall design and flow

Organization	West Beach Resort
URL	http://www.westbeachresort.com/
Review conducted by	…
Audience	Vacationers, outdoor enthusiasts, boaters, couples, families, wedding parties
Screenshot(s)	
Architecture & navigation	Large focus on accommodations – multiple navigational links for different cabins, cottages, RV hook-ups, etc. Activities are centered under "Activities Kiosk" section rather than called out separately, except… Why is Fishing called out as its own link/page, in a separate area of the site navigation, nowhere near the Activities link in the nav? Some pages have almost no content – just a few lines of text. Goodies page could be combined with another.

	"Resort" link contains history; another link called "History" contains historic photos – bad architecture and naming.
	They threw every link they couldn't find a place for under a long list of links on a single page called "Links." It includes links to transportation, activities (not to be confused with the separate "Activities" page which contains several paragraphs of text describing the activities one can do at the resort.
Visual audit	Photos are small, can't be enlarged and don't always showcase all features of a cabin (like, the inside)Content – often at the bottom of page where a user would likely often miss it.
	Many long paragraphs of text – not web-friendly content.
Special features & supported tasks	Don't get the community feeling that Doe Bay site already has – no personality.
Design and usability notes	Architecture could use improvement to address some usability issues (e.g. the history and historical photos pages)
	Content heavy – lots of paragraphs of text. Not web friendly
Considerations for final project	Don't do much of what West Beach Resort has done in our Doe Bay redesign
	Photos are really important to showcase what a resort has to offer – don't skimp on them, and do allow them to be viewed larger.
	Content strategy is very important – long paragraphs of text do not work
	Not much inspiration on the West Beach Resort site to help meet the goals of the owners of Doe Bay, including the "community feel" – there's none of that on the WBR site.