

BADCamp 2012

Hi-fi and Lo-fi Theming

Quality Design Implementation

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- How can some of this happen?

Frequency

- Inexperience
- Insufficient planning
- Scope or functionality change without more discovery
- Budget and deadline crunch
- Hard stuff left to the end, or gets cut in the interest of time or money

- Let's establish the space and situation we are working in
- Having a design or style guide before you start theming will make other issues down the road less volatile.
- More often than not, the person making design decisions is not the person implementing them
- As someone who has played both roles, I think having that experience has enabled me to do both jobs better, and work with the other to really make some great things
- It is difficult to make design decisions and theme simultaneously. Can implement designs, and resist designing while implementing.
- I've found that in practice it also lets Drupal make decisions for you without you knowing.

- Overriding, removing or customizing defaults that work against a site design but are relatively easy to accomplish.

There is nothing wrong with a Drupal site being itself! But we can change it

- Customizing Drupal will not be easy if you do not know HTML or CSS. You need to have something under your belt, so let's start there. No need to know the entire spec, but you should be a confident HTML and CSS author
- Sometimes designers who do not have web design experience, let alone Drupal experience, intentionally or naively make decisions on their gut. Being or finding a designer who is open to learning about Drupal will make for a more successful site. Harmony at its finest.
- Having a design or style guide before you start theming will make other issues down the road less volatile. It is difficult to make design decisions and theme simultaneously. It also lets Drupal make decisions for you without you knowing.

Know your medium and be honest about your ability!

- When you install Drupal, the base theme includes the Druplicon logo for the logo, a druplicon favicon, and the 'Powered by Drupal' block.
- Adding your logo and a favicon, and hiding the block are really quick ways to remove Drupal branding.
- You can configure the favicon and logo settings on the `admin/appearance/settings/` page for the base theme or a sub-theme, or add the images directly to the site's root folder.
- Hide the Powered By Drupal block on the `admin/structure/block` page by moving that block to the disabled section and saving.

All the Drupal

- Druplicon favicon
- Druplicon logo
- "Powered by Drupal" block

- Drupal 7 ships with Bartik, and you can download a number of other contributed themes. Using these themes as is doesn't do much for your content because they were created for generic use, one size fits all. They are generic for a reason, and their reason's are good, but not appropriate for your branding and web identity.
- Creating a sub-theme of a base theme is the accepted way of customizing your site.
- Distributions are a great way to save time on a site if it suits your organization's site needs, but what you save in time you lose in flexibility and tailoring because they are pre-made.
- Distributions do make more specific decisions because they have an intended use-case and audience, but they can be more difficult to customize than a regular Drupal install because of the implementation.

Dead Giveaways

Using a Core theme or Distribution

- Bartik
- Garland
- COD
- Commons

- Drupal is a content management system, and therefore provides a way for the site to have users that can log in. The key to this process is the user and password block and /user page.
- Many designers who are unfamiliar with CMS's would not necessarily know or think to create a design or custom treatment for this page. The result is usually the form as is picking up the theme styles that apply.
- Make decisions about the states, steps, and confirmation emails.

- A nice feature of Drupal is that it provides summaries and teasers based on full content pieces to be used as a lead-in.
- This it is a useful tool, but often left as the default length. It can easily be changed or customized to suit the content.
- Also worth considering: the teasers are accompanied by the content title, author, and a read more link.

- Common page elements that Drupal has defaults for that get overlooked.

- Stylistic customizations helps the theme look more cohesive. Drupal has styles for many common elements, and when they are not restyled they can stick out in your theme.

- Drupal-specific elements that get overlooked, especially regarding changing the indicator images that accompany these where applicable, like arrows, close x's, and the search button image.

- System details that are easily changed but rarely considered mapped out.
- Wordage and verbiage details are taken for granted, but making decisions can contribute to user experience.
- Reflect content's tone: formal, friendly, technical, regional, industry-specific, etc.

- Field label text is displayed above the field content by default, but in the content type field display you can change it to be inline or hidden. The actual labels are the names of the fields themselves, so field creation is an opportunity to convey the site's overall tone.
- By default Drupal uses its naming conventions for content paths, (/node, /user) You can customize these paths to better fit your information architecture or menu system. At the very least, change /node and /content. Customize the path of your content with pathauto rules.
- Consider language and styling for the following: Error Message, Status Message, Warning Message, Help Message, access denied you are not authorized to access this page 403, page not found 404
- Drupal provides this information to its users, and customizing the look and actual text both allows you another level of control, while removing more Drupal defaults.

- Blocks are the outdated, but quick and easy way to place pieces of content in their desired region, but what is gained in ease, simplicity, because these pieces are modular, the seamlessness and integration of content is lost.
- Too many blocks can leave a site, well, looking blocky as unincorporated one-offs. The use of blocks should be measure and intentional, and care should be taken to apply backgrounds, treat block headers, and be cognizant of the spacing in and around the block.
- A block should be the most appropriate for the content, not necessarily the look

- Image styles come with Drupal core, and include some default styles. I would recommend creating your own image styles to use and either ignoring or removing the defaults so that they don't dictate proportions and cropping.
- The defaults take some of the semantically useful names, so that can be confusing to content editors.

- These changes and customizations are close to or on the surface of Drupal. Default styles can be overridden with CSS and when applied evenly, minimizing the occurrence of missed areas to get burned on.
- Also customizing and taking the time to configure the text, blocks, images, and paths leaves your site much cleaner without hum and buzz.

- Some of areas of theming are a little bit tougher and require working Drupal's default styling a markup more in depth.
- These types of changes often can add extra polish, but also are more costly in terms of time and effort required.

- Implementing changes that are counterintuitive to Drupal's patterns can be difficult to code, time intensive, expensive or all three
- If there is an elegant solution, such as a hook alter or preprocess, then you can assume your change will be adequate to achieve the desired result.
- If hacking is required, changes can cause theme landslides if they are not self-contained or staked out.
- Bigger tools can do bigger jobs to make more drastic changes, but also do more damage

Need to be confident enough to cut your own path, deeper changes can be the difference between a success and a disaster

Theme landslides!

Khait landslide: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khait_landslide

- Using a theme's default templates, or the default layouts from panels, while they may seem to do the job, can leave your layout a little lackluster.
- If the design has common layouts, it be be worth it to create a custom template or two in order to leverage more control of the layout. This includes the header and footer regions, and container wrappers.
- Good templates to tweak are the page, node, and comment layouts, namely the placement of the title.

- The node and comment templates are pretty generic. Customizing the author details and formatting, even changing the label text (submitted, posted, by), can be very worthwhile.
- Also controlling the date formatting by setting up how dates should be displayed allows for more design control.
- Being conscientious of these elements in different contexts, like in a sidebar, as a list, as a teaser or the full content display.

- Menus are the basis of the Drupal system. With thought and planning, menus can be really fantastic.
- Spending time on menu states, active trail, and how the main menu works in conjunction with secondary menus, the breadcrumbs and content editing tabs requires more effort than a standard ul menu.
- Menu tree images - arrows, hyphens and list-styles
- A tab need not look like one!

- Forms have many nooks and crannies
- Works out of box, but are often not customized because it is difficult, or will take too long
- Password fields have extra components like validation and security strength bars
- Drupal does forms well, but they can be difficult to customize sufficiently if you are not familiar with all of the states that will be used

Forms and fields

Form states

- Form progress
 - Initial (blank)
 - Partially filled
 - Finished
 - Confirmation
- Required field indicators
- Input error indicators
- Multi-step forms

Forms and fields

Search and filter forms

- Search field with button or auto-submit
- Exposed views filters
- Facet check boxes
- Ajax loading - ajax throbber

Equalization

Balancing the Hi's and Lo's

- Drupal does things well. Use this to your advantage.
- Recognize places where Drupal falls short and compensate or improve them
- Seeing patterns so that you know when to work with them or against them will systematically allow you to avoid half-theming pieces of the system.

Finding the balance of when to let Drupal show and when rework it

Questions?

Credits and Resources

- Does my site look Drupally <https://www.acquia.com/blog/does-my-site-look-drupally>
- Drupalism <http://www.nicklewis.org/node/979>
- Do's and Don'ts <http://www.advomatic.com/blogs/amanda-luker/designing-drupal-dos-and-donts>
- Common elements from Chapter 3 http://chapterthree.com/blog/nica_lorber/design_drupal_template_approach
- Theming firehose <http://rarepattern.com/nodes/2011/theming-firehose-nb-designers-front-end-developers-new-drupal>
- Zivtech style guide <http://www.zivtech.com/zivtech-style-guide>
- Theming a system <http://www.slideshare.net/fourkitchens/dont-design-websites-design-web-systems-badcamp-2011>

Thanks!

I'm dead_arm on Drupal.org and Twitter